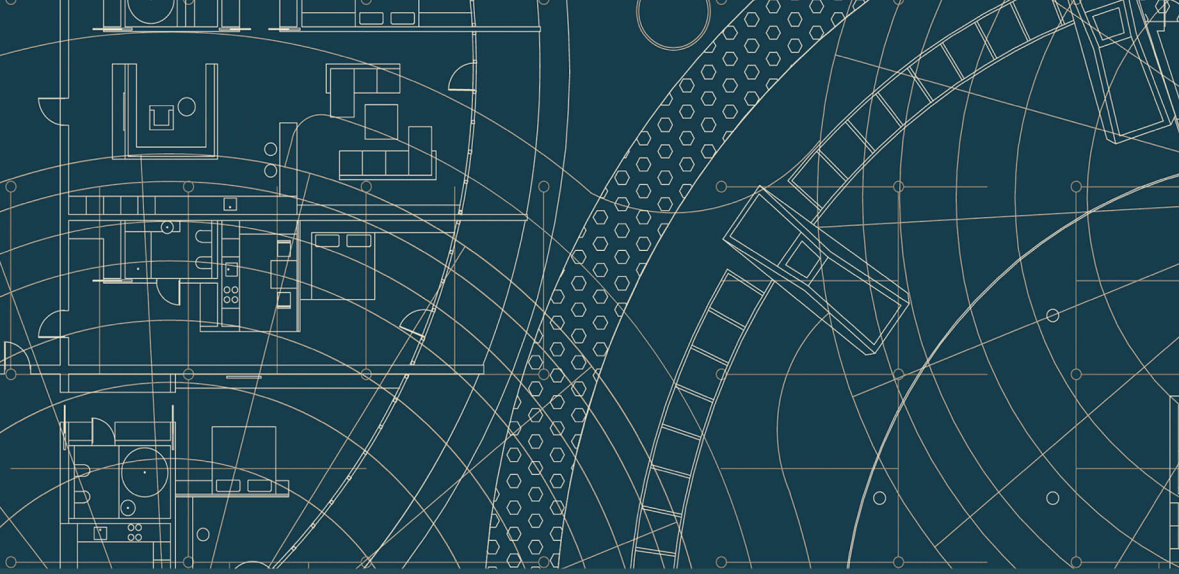

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GREEK-ALBANIAN ENTANGLEMENTS SINCE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A HISTORY

Alexis Heraclides and Ylli Kromidha

ROUTLEDGE

Greek-Albanian Entanglements since the Nineteenth Century

This book is a comprehensive study of more than 200 years of the shared and interconnected histories of Greek-Albanian relations, a field of inquiry that has not attracted the international scholarly attention it deserves.

The book presents and analyses in detail topics including the contested borderland (1800–1912), the Greek Revolution (1821–1830) and Greek-Albanian entanglements during the Greek Revolution, Greek nationalism (identity and narrative), the Albanians (pre-modernism, belated nationalism, origin), the rise of Albanian nationalism, Albanian national identity and historical narrative, Greek-Albanian relations from the League of Prizren (1878) until Albania's declaration of independence (1912), Greek irredentism (the "Northern Epirus Question", 1912–1920) and Albania's precarious independence, Greek irredentism and Greek-Albanian relations (the "Northern Epirus Question", 1940–1971), the Greek minority in Albania, the Cham (Muslim Albanian) issue, the turbulent first part of the 1990s, the pending Greek-Albanian issues, and public opinion. It concludes with a road map for an eventual Albanian-Greek reconciliation.

This volume will interest scholars and students of Southeastern Europe (Balkans), international relations and history, political science and sociology. It will also be a valuable resource for diplomats, journalists, think tanks and other organizations and institutions involved in the Balkans Greek-Albanian relations.

Alexis Heraclides is Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. He has written several books in English and Greek, including *The Macedonian Question and the Macedonians: A History* (2021).

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A History

Alexis Heraclides and Ylli Kromidha

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Greek-Albanian relations is a field of inquiry that has not attracted the international scholarly attention it deserves, perhaps because contrary to relations between other adversarial dyads it has not led to a major crisis or armed conflict at least not in living memory, that is, from 1945 onwards.

But if one moves backwards in time to the nineteenth century one discovers an intriguing history. There is a vacillating initially shared history, such as living harmoniously together under the legendary Ali Pasha, then fighting together as 'true brothers and sisters' in the Greek War of Independence (1821–1831), as regards Orthodox Christian Albanians and Greeks and as 'reluctant foes', as regards Muslim Albanians. In fact Greek-Albanian relations have a far longer history that goes back to the late Medieval era, when a wave of Albanian speakers migrated to the southern Balkans (in today's southern Greece), in the fourteenth century to be – fully or partly – assimilated into the Byzantine culture, with other smaller waves later, mostly in the eighteenth century which were not assimilated but formed part and parcel of the *Rum millet* that is the Orthodox Christian community within the Ottoman Empire.

In the Ottomans Empire there were overlapping or fluid identities in what was until the early 1870s largely a pre-modern landscape with religion rather than ethnicity the main form of collective identity, with Albanian nationalism still dormant (it was on the rise elsewhere among intellectuals in Italy, the Italo-Albanians, the descendants of Albanian immigration in the fifteenth century, following the Ottoman conquest of their homeland). In the Kingdom of Greece, the Hellenised (bilingual) of Albanian descent, who comprised at least one-fourth of the population, could hold the highest of positions, such as prime ministers, ministers, academics, rectors, ambassadors, admirals and generals. However from the late 1870s onwards Greece was vexed by the rise of Albanian nationalism in the Albanian-inhabited regions of the Ottoman Empire and did everything in its power to arrest it. The Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople, which previously had stood clear of ethnic rivalries, was keen to oblige, the aim of Athens and the Patriarchate being to assimilate the Orthodox Albanians whom they regarded – erroneously of course – as Greeks. Yet surprisingly until the beginning of the twentieth century,

relations between the elites on both sides remained cordial and many Orthodox Albanians in the Ottoman Empire were attracted to Greece, especially those with Greek education, not to mention the many mixed marriages.

All this was to change drastically in 1912, when Greece tried to secure southern Albania, which it arbitrarily called 'Northern Epirus', claiming implausibly that the majority were Greeks, with Greek national consciousness, lumping all the Orthodox Albanians (and Vlachs) with the Greeks whose numbers were limited to barely 30,000. Greece asserted itself by repeatedly occupying the region militarily, with an array of acts of violence against the Albanians. In the various peace conferences, following the Balkan Wars and the end of the First World War, Greece claimed 'Northern Epirus' and it was the great powers that saved the Albanians, in particular the US.

In the interwar period, relations were not very friendly given two bones of contention, with both parties to blame. In both instances they involved the respective national minorities, the Greek minority in southern Albania and the Albanian (Muslim Cham) minority in north-western Greece, with Greece more to blame for its treatment of the Chams.

Following the end of the Second World War relations were frosty, with no diplomatic relations until 1971, despite the repeated Albanian initiatives aimed at resuming them. The reason for Greece's stance had less to do with the fact that the two states were on either side of the Iron Curtain and more to do with the revived Greek claim to 'Northern Epirus', which had been placed on the table at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference. The resumption of diplomatic relations in 1971 led to an amelioration of relations, but they again reached a very low level following the end of the Cold War, in the first part of the 1990s, when Greece chose to introduce once again the 'Northern Epirus' issue under the pretext that the Greek minority in Albanian was treated harshly (this was hardly the case though there were some justifiable grievances, especially as regards education). Moreover there was from 1991 onwards a huge wave of Albanian economic immigrants (many of them illegal) to Greece, who interestingly managed to learn Greek with greater ease than the immigrants from other eastern European countries. From 1996 until today relations between Albania and Greece have been better than ever before but there are still a number of pending issues, sore points and traumas (mainly on the Albanian side), which fuel lack of trust and mutual suspicion, and as a result no genuine rapprochement across the board has taken place, despite conciliatory statements to the contrary by officials of both governments.

In Greek-Albanian relations, *entanglements* is probably the most appropriate term and more attuned to present-day approaches regarding borderlands; it is a case of entangled, shared and interconnected histories, with various transfers and crossings, having lived together for centuries under multiethnic empires (the Byzantine, Bulgarian and more briefly the Serbian Empire, and mostly under the Ottoman Empire), prior to the advent of the age of nationalism, with the Greeks and Serbs nationalism at the forefront in the Balkans.

This book is not limited to a presentation and analysis of the entanglements between two peoples for 200 years and their inter-state relations, but also throws light on a number of dimensions studied in recent decades regarding antagonistic dyads and borderlands. They include the following.

First is the simultaneous interplay and overlap between pre-modern and modern attachments and mindsets. And from this ambit there is ample ground for deconstructing essentialist and retrospective approaches.

Second are shared and interconnected histories and the instance of fluid identities and switching allegiances, with more than one transfer and crossing and marginality in border regions not only in the nineteenth century, with the existence of ethnic minorities on both sides of the Greek-Albanian dividing line in the twentieth century, as well as more recently, following the end of the Cold War, the legal and illegal Albanian immigrants in Greece.

Third is the role of national identity cum conflicting national narratives, including national traumas, real, imagined, over-emphasised or distorted, as the main reasons for not burying the hatchet, despite many opportunities, especially from the mid-1990s onwards.

Fourth is the role of expansionist irredentism, including the persecution of minorities and in one case, the Chams of Greece, veritable ethnic cleansing by Greek bands, though not by the Greek state as such.

Fifth is the role of minorities and the descendants of refugees and their respective pressure groups in influencing the respective foreign policies of both Albania and Greece.

Contrary to scholarly works by Germans, British, French, Italians and of course Albanians, on various aspects of Albanian history and identity, and an impressive array of books on modern Greece, the works on Greek-Albanian relations are few, almost exclusively in Albanian and Greek, most of them for home audiences and more often than not biased one way or another, with an axe to grind. They have been written by a handful of Greek and Albanian *cognoscenti*, academics, diplomats and journalists, in Albanian or Greek and not translated into any international language. Few of these works, even by serious academics are truly scholarly; and even those that achieve an acceptable level of scholarship are adept at the game of hiding the prejudices of the authors and their ethnocentrism, their hidden agenda being to present the other side negatively and one's own side as positively as possible.

On a more personal note, which happens to illustrate the entanglement cum crossings and mixed identities, the older author, who is Greek (with the most Greek name imaginable), is almost certainly one-fourth of Albanian origin (a descendent from his grandmother from his mother's side from the waves of Albanians that arrived in the southern Balkans in the fourteenth century and lived in Kranidi, an Albanian-inhabited town in northeastern Peloponnese), while the younger author is an Albanian immigrant who has been living in Greece for many years and is an Albanian and Greek citizen.

This volume is of course a joint venture. However six chapters have been written solely by Alexis Heraclides who bears full responsibility for their

content. They are Chapters 1 (Contested borderlands), 2 (Greek Revolution), 3 (Greek-Albanian entanglements during the Greek Revolution), 4 (Greek nationalism), 8 (Greek-Albanian relations from the League of Prizren until Albania's declaration of independence) and 9 (The 'Northern Epirus Question', first phase, 1912–1920).[1]

Alexis Heraclides and Ylli Kromidha would like to thank for their considerable assistance (in alphabetical order) the following: Ioannis Armakolas, Lambros Baltsiotis, Leonidas Embirikos, Robert Goro, Beqir Meta, Paskal Milo, Vasil Nasaj, Elias Skoulidas and Yiannis Yianoulopoulos. They would also like to thank Vassilis Bornovas, Yorgos Christidis, Dimitris Christopoulos, Ada Dialla, Eda Gemi, Konstantinos Giakoumis, Basil Gounaris, Spyros Kakouriotis, Yiannis Ktistakis, Kriton Kuci, Eleftheria Manta, Nicos Sigalas, Konstantinos Tsitselikis, Mania Telalian and Stavros Tzimas. And Alexis Heraclides thanks his cousin, theatre director Corinna Seeds, for providing valuable British reports on Albania in the 1920s.

Note

1 Place names are often a problem in historical studies, especially those spanning two centuries such as this one. As regards Albanian place names, there are two approaches at either side of the spectrum. One adopted by Natalie Clayer is to use the Albanian alphabet in all circumstances and epochs, e.g. Gjirokastër, Shkodër; the other by Miranda Vickers is to use the generally acknowledged mainly anglicised version, e.g. Girokaster, Shkoder. We have chosen to follow the latter line, but in the first mention of a place name (and in some cases in the second mention) in parenthesis we will have the Albanian name or the Greek one in Latin letters, as appropriate or both, e.g. Girokaster (Gjirokastër, Argyrokastro), Shkoder (Shkodër). There is also the problem of Constantinople or Istanbul. After 1453, the Ottomans used the name Constantinople, then switched to Kostantiniyye (an Arab designation), with Istanbul used from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In European languages and in European diplomacy, the original Constantinople was used as late as the early 1920s. In this volume, we used Constantinople obviously for the Byzantine period and when reference is made to the Patriarch or Patriarchate of Constantinople; in other instances, Constantinople/Istanbul is used.

1 Contested borderlands, 1800–1900

Geography and ethnic composition

In quest of geographical boundaries

One of the original difficulties involving the Greek-Albanian entanglement and overall relationship is where to place the boundary between the two parties as putative nation-states. Historically, both parties have sought the very same region for their own, a region of the Ottoman Empire where the Turkish speakers were a small minority. The main apple of discord was Epirus with its mixed settlement patterns, the heartland of what had been for 30 years a semi-independent state under the legendary Ali Pasha, with Janina (Ioannina in Greek) as its capital.[1] Greece and Greek public opinion laid claim to a 'large Epirus' for 'historical reasons', which included a large chunk of southern Albania, the most maximalist aim being to go as far north as the Shkumbin River, which amounts to half of today's Albania. The Albanians for their part from the late 1870s until their independence in 1912 extended the border of a future Albanian state to the Ambrakikos Gulf, which meant claiming the whole of today's Greek Epirus.[2]

Given the clashing claims which people lived in antiquity in Epirus is 'a highly controversial issue'.[3] Thucydides in the fourth century BC claimed that parts of the coastline of Epirus were inhabited by 'barbarians', that is 'non-Greeks' in the parlance of the time. Strabo, stranding the BC and the AD years and Claudius Ptolemy in the second century AD were of the view that Greek Epirus extends to the north in what is today southern Albania, but Strabo maintained that in Epirus the Greek tribes intermingled with Illyrian tribes and the inhabitants tended to be bilingual. As regards present-day Albania, in antiquity the region was Greek Epirus and Illyria, which the latter in the third century creating a kingdom extending to the north in the Adriatic coastline. Note that the Illyrians are arguably the ancestors of today's Albanians (see Chapter 5).[4]

Most of the foreign commentators at the end of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century placed 'Albania' as they called it (even though it did not exist as an entity or as an administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire) to the south up to the Ambrakikos Gulf, and some even as far to the south as Akarnania (north of the Gulf of Corinth); to the north they

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placed the limits bordering on Montenegro, others put the limits further to the south, on the Drina River, curiously not including the region of Shkoder (Shkodër) inhabited mainly by Albanian speakers. As for Epirus, it was presented as a subdivision of wider Albania, with Albania split into two parts: north of Durres (Durrës**i,** Dyrachion) it tended to be called Illyria and to the south Epirus. Some foreigners distinguished between Old Epirus south of Himara and New Epirus to the north of Himara. Yet another designation of the time was Upper Albania which roughly corresponded to today's Albania and Lower Albania which corresponds to today's Epirus in Greece.[5]

The French writer and philhellene François Pouqueville, who served as the French consul-general in Janina and was intimate with Ali Pasha, in his five-volume *Voyage en Grèce* (1821–1822), places in 'Epirus', Dropulli, Girokaster (Gjirokastër, Argyrokastro), Permet (Përmeti, Premeti) and even Vlora (Vlorë, Avlona), and in what he calls 'Middle Albania', Mouzakia, Mallakastra, Skrapari, Berat and Elbasan.[6] The retired English colonel, topographer and British agent William Martin Leake who travelled extensively in 'Greece' and 'Albania', as he called them, describes his first travel to the 'Albanian coastline' in Vlora (in 1804) though not in a chapter titled 'Albania' but one titled 'Epirus', in his book titled *Travels in Northern Greece*, instead of in southern Albania.[7]

Contrary to Pouqueville and Leak who anticipated and seem to condone the future Greek claims, the English traveller and physician Henry Holland who had several interesting conversations with Ali Pasha in his impressive *saray* (palace), placed within 'Albania', as he called it, not only Shkoder, Vlora, Durres, Berat and Girokaster, but also to the south, Janina and the towns of Preveza and Paramythia.[8] He also wrote that the Greek presence in Janina is intense, but that further to the north of the city one very rarely sees Greeks.[9]

Now turning to the Greek commentators prior to the start of the Greek Revolution in 1821, two noted literati of what later came to be known as the Neo-Hellenic or Greek Enlightenment, the cousins Daniel Philippides and Gregorios Konstantas, in a volume, published in 1791, titled *I Geographia Neoteriki* (*Modern Geography*), place Girokaster and Himara in Epirus, and Vlora and Elbasan in 'Lower *Arvanitia*'.[10]

A major figure of the Greek Enlightenment, Athanasios Psalidas held a different view. For him '*Arvanitia*' in the sense of Albania includes the region from Bosnia and Serbia to the south down to the Ambrakikos Gulf. Epirus as it was called 'in the old days' is better designated as 'Lower *Arvanitia*' and 'Upper *Arvanitia*' which is the original Illyrian region. However, in the course of the Greek Revolution, he switched his position reasons, stating that Lower *Arvanitia* is better designated as Epirus.[11]

As regards the Balkans before Greek independence, there seem to have been two diametrically opposed views among Greek and Hellenised intellectuals and activists on the matter. One was an extremely far-fetched notion of a future *Hellas* (Greece) acquiring the whole of 'European Turkey'; the other

of securing 'classical Greece', the southern Balkan to the north that included Thessaly up to Mount Olympus and up to the Aliakmon River.[12]

The first line is to be seen with the fiery activist and poet Rigas Velestinlis's in his *Charta tis Ellados* (Charter of Greece), published in 1797 (Rigas, a Hellenised Vlach, is one of the two iconic figures of the Greek Enlightenment, together with scholar Adamantios Korais, see Chapter 4). Rigas, however, did not speak in terms of a future Greek *national* state in the Balkans (up to the Danube River where he placed its borders),[13] though he named it '*Elliniki Dimokratia*' (Hellenic Republic). His call was for a multiethnic Balkan confederation of all the downtrodden peoples of the Balkans, with Greek as the official language and Greeks prominent among its leaders.[14]

Another version of this grandiose scheme, is by Neophytos Doukas, who called upon the Patriarchate in Constantinople to Hellenise all the Balkan Christians and to do so by sending a hundred monks from Mount Athos (the famous peninsula with its imposing 20 monasteries).[15]

The opposite line is to be found in the works of Nikiforos Theotokis and Kyriakos Kapetanakis, who followed the suggestion of contemporary German geographer Adam Christian Gaspari, whose books had been translated into Greek. According to this more realistic view, the limits of Greece were to be Mount Olympus, based on the limits of the ancient Greek city-states up to Thessaly.[16] The latter stance was to be adopted in the late 1820s by Ioannis Capodistrias, the first Greek Head of State and a revered figure of European diplomacy since the days he was Co-Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire. He placed the 'defensible' borders of *Grèce Continental* to include Thessaly and Epirus, but not Macedonia given its extended Slavic presence.[17] Mention should also be made of Ignatios, Bishop of Hungary and Wallachia, a major Greek thinker and activist who attacked Doukas 'calumnies' with an array of arguments stating that several nations existed in 'European Turkey', with distinct language and culture, the Hellenes, the Bulgarians, the Vlachs, the Serbs and the Albanians.[18]

Albania or Epirus was a *terra incognita* for the new small Kingdom of Greece and beyond the claims of the Greeks in its first decades of its existence (1830s–1850s). However, for good measure, Athens kept an eye on the region by establishing three consulates in 'Epirus' (as it was called) based in Janina, in 'Lower Albania' (as it was called), in Vlora, and in Upper Albania (as it was called) in Durres. By and large Epirus was regarded to be today's Greek Epirus in addition to a coastline by the Adriatic up to the ancient remains of the Greek and Roman city of Butrint.[19]

Ethnic composition

As regards southern Albania, which the Greeks in the second decade of the twentieth century came to call Northern Epirus (*Voreios Epirus*), the situation was ethnically complex until the 1870s, with no clear variance between Orthodox Christian Albanian speakers, Greek speakers and Vlach speakers.[20]

More generally as regards the borderlines of overlapping southern Albania and northern Greece in the nineteenth century, the ethnic, linguistic, cultural and other attributes were blurred among Albanian speakers, Greek speakers and Vlach speakers, with the Orthodox Albanians (and Orthodox Vlachs) who of course were part of the *Rum millet* (the Greek Orthodox community) generally called 'Greeks' (to be more accurate, they were called *Romioi*).[21]

Psallidas, before the Greek Revolution, distinguished three populations: the Greek Christians living in various villages in and around Dropulli, Delvina (Delvino) and Himara; the Albanian Christians living in villages north and northeast of Dropulli, in some villages in Delvina, Himara, Permet and Kolonja (Kolonia in Greek), and in some 20 villages of Korca (Korça, Korytsa); and the 'Albanian Turks' by which they meant the Muslim Albanians living in the southern region.[22]

The Greek amateur historian Panayiotis Aravantinos in his *Chronographia tis Epirou ton te omoron ellinikon kai illyrikon choron* (Chronography of Epirus and the neighbouring Greek and Illyrian countries) published in 1857 distinguishes Epirus into two parts based on the ancient Roman division, and comes up with no less than seven populations living there: (1) Greeks as the descendants of the indigenous Greek Epirotes, probably Hellenised Pelasgians; (2) Albanians or Skipitarians, the indigenous descendants of the Pelasgians and Illyrians whose mother tongue is Albanian; (3) Graeco-Albanians, an admixture of Albanians and Greeks; (4) a small number of Slavs; (5) Cudso-Vlachs in various regions; (6) Arvanito-Vlachoi (Albanian-Vlachs) who speak Albanian and (7) Gypsies divided into Christians, Muslims or others with unclear religion.[23]

As for the Albanians or more accurately the Albanian speakers, they were until the 1860s and early 1870s, largely an *ethnic group*, in the strict sense of the term,[24] a linguistic and cultural group defined as such by foreigners as well as by themselves, but not yet a self-defined nation, with few exceptions, mainly Albanian intellectuals outside the region, especially in Italy (see Chapter 6).

The main division of the Albanians from the eighteenth century until today is into two major geo-ethnographical areas, the Northern Ghegeri and the Southern Toskeri on the basis of the dialect used, with the Shkumbin River as the dividing line. To the north of the river are the Ghegs with the Gheg dialect of Albanian, who in their great majority were (and are) Muslims, with a smaller percentage of Catholic Christians; and to the south of the river are the Tosks with the Tosk dialect, divided into roughly equal numbers of Orthodox Christians and Muslims.[25]

From the start of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century, the Muslim Ghegs and Tosks constitute 70 percent of the overall Albanian population, the Orthodox Christian Tosks 20 percent and the Catholic Ghegs 10 percent (most of the Muslims are Sunni Muslims, but there are also a considerable number of Sufis, divided into Mevlevis in the north and Bektashis in the south).[26] Bektashism, a Muslim pantheistic sect that shows

striking tolerance and respect for different religions, had spread in Albania, especially in the south, as nowhere else in the Balkans and influenced the traditional Albanian attitude of open-mindedness on matters of faith.[27] In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Ghegs in the north had contact with Italy and Austria-Hungary while the Orthodox Tosks in the south 'were more closely associated with the patriarchate and were more under Greek cultural influence'.[28] Both Ghegs and Tosks comprised of various clans and sub-clans like the Scotts. The Tosks and especially the Ghegs lived in tightly knit tribes or clans known in Albanian as *fis*, which was headed by the oldest male.[29]

The two main Albanian dialects are not markedly different (as the Greeks have tended to assume) and are understood by both sides, with the existing common elements far more than the differences, as pointed out in the late nineteenth century by the important Danish linguist Holger Pedersen,[30] and by the major Albanian poet Naim H. Frashëri,[31] and today by eminent Albanian linguists, such as Shaban Demiraj and others.[32] The differences between the two mega-clans, apart from the linguistic one, were as regards customs and social patterns: the Ghegs were ruled by tribal chieftains in a patriarchal but egalitarian fashion, well into the 1930s, having been until the early twentieth century mostly shepherds and brigands living in their rugged northern mountains; the Tosks in the south were less primitive but less egalitarian, based on landlord-peasant class division, with the landowners, the beys (or begs) the dominant class.[33] In the south, there are two other subdivisions of the Tosks, the Liaps to the north and the Chams to the south (Muslims and Orthodox Christians); hence, there are three categories of Tosks, the Tosks proper and the other two.[34]

The Albanian ethnic group which from the 1870s onwards gradually developed into a new nation, the last to appear in the nineteenth-century Balkans, resided in four vilayets (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire: Janina, Monastir (Bitola), Shkoder and Kosovo (also known as Skopje).[35]

The Albanian speakers or Albanians (Skipitars as they had chosen to call themselves since the eighteenth century) were the majority only in the vilayet of Shkoder and in the central part of the vilayet of Kosovo/Skopje, though not in the vilayet as a whole, which also included several Serbian-inhabited regions, such as Niš and others.[36] In the vilayet of Kosovo, the population was considerably mixed, with the Muslims in the majority, with 56–64 percent and the Christians 34–46 percent. The Albanians who were Muslim of the Gheg tribe and some Catholic Ghegs did not form the majority but they, together with the Slav speakers formed the two largest linguistic-ethnic groups.[37] In the vilayet of Janina, a considerable number of Albanian and Vlachs speakers had become partly or wholly Hellenised.[38]

Albanian nationalism from the late 1870s onwards tended to regard all four vilayets as Albanian, and on that basis sought from the Ottomans, from 1878 until the eve of the Balkan Wars in 1912, the unification of the four vilayets into one Ottoman administrative until to be run mostly by Albanians, in what would have amounted to a level of autonomy.[39]

In the vilayet of Janina, the Greek presence and economic, educational and cultural influence was extensive, but there were also many Albanians. Apart from the Greeks and Albanians, there were also Slavs, Vlachs, Jews and Roma.[40] In the Pashalik of Janina under Ali Pasha, a multiethnic semi-independent entity of some 75,000 square kilometres, which dominated the scene for more than 30 years, from 1788 until late 1821, the Greeks (Greek speakers to be more exact) formed the majority because the Pashalik was not confined to the original vilayet of Janina, but included other parts of southern Albania, a section of central Macedonia, most of Thessaly and even a large chunk of Sterea Ellada (Rumeli as it was then known), save for Viotia and Attica, as well as the city of Patras in Peloponnese (Morea as it was then known).[41]

The greater ethnic disparity from the days of Ali Pasha until 1912 or 1920 appeared in the vilayet of Janina, which comprised of today's Greek Epirus and southern Albania (that is all of Toskeria, the Tosk region).[42] According to Nathalie Clayer and other specialists,[43] to the north and centre of the vilayet, the Albanians dominated and in the south the Greeks. Most commentators tended to draw a line in the vilayet, from Saranda to Konica or from Himara and Girokaster to Konica, on the north of which the Albanians dominated and in the south the Greeks were preponderant. But there were several exceptions to this demarcation, such as the Chams in the south and the Vlachs and Roma in various places.[44]

The Janina vilayet from the 1820s until 1912 was comprised of four subunits, called santzaks: from north to south, Berat, Girokaster, Janina and Preveza. In the whole vilayet, the Greek presence and influence were considerable in these 90 years, with the Greeks a strong minority but with the Albanian speakers, be they Muslim and Orthodox Christians, the majority of the population, two-thirds of which were Muslim Tosks and one-third Orthodox Christian Tosks, living mainly in the santzak of Girokaster and in the north and west of the Janina santzak. The Orthodox Christians were Albanians, Greeks and Vlachs, though their distinctive lines were not very obvious, due to their common culture, many mixed marriages (an indication that relations were amicable and friendly), education (in Greek schools) and bilingualism or trilingualism (in the case of the Vlachs), in what was a case of fluid ethnonational identity. In Chameria to the south, most of the Chams were bilingual (speaking Albanian and Greek) and those of them who were Orthodox Christians had a dual sense of identity and many of them were Hellenised, especially the educated.[45]

The Greek language was held in high esteem among the Christians, to begin with as the language of the Bible, the Church and of religious ceremonies. Moreover, the Christians irrespective of mother tongue who wanted to become literate had no other option than to attend Greek schools until as late as the early 1890s (for the Ottoman authorities did not permit Albanian schools).[46]

In general, the prestige of Greek had no equal from the Ionian and Adriatic Seas to the Black Sea until the mid-nineteenth century. For the Albanian speakers, Vlach speakers and many Slav speakers (mainly Bulgarians and

Slav-Macedonians), Greek was the language of a 'civilized' Balkan individual, of the educated middle class as well as the lingua franca of commerce.[47] The view prevailed that expressing themselves in a 'cultured' way could only be done in Greek and in this way they could also achieve upwards social mobility, becoming literate and respected members of the nascent bourgeoisie.[48] Put differently in the parlance of today's sociology, the Greeks and their language functioned as the 'reference group', the concept conceived by Robert Merton.

However, the prestige of Greek and its dissemination did not amount to having acquired Greek national identity, despite the extent of acculturation. In the region under examination, people still lived in the pre-modern era until the 1870s and there was no notion of 'Greek' (*Hellene*), but of *Romios* (Roman), a member of the *Rum millet*; and as for the Greek expansionist tendency, along the famous or infamous (depending on the recipient) *Megali Idea* (Great Idea) (see Chapter 4) it had not touched the region prior to the 1870s as far as the Greek speakers were concerned.[49]

Notes

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9 *Ibid*., 114.
10 Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias apo tin skopia tis istorikis geographias kai dimographias', 27; Basil C. Gounaris, *Ta Valkania ton Ellinon: apo ton Diafotismo eos ton A Pangosmio Polemo* [The Balkans of the Greeks: from the Enlightenment to the First World War] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2007), 49, 52.

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2 The Greek Revolution

Main events and international dimension

The Greek Revolution (as the Greek War of Independence is known) erupted in early 1821. The initial spark had been the Enlightenment and the French Revolution with its call for popular sovereignty, republican rule, civil rights and the principle of nationalities.[1]

The Ottoman reaction to the French Revolution was that it was an internal affair of *Frangistan* that would 'spread like syphilis to the enemies of the Empire, hurl them into prolonged conflict with one another and thus accomplish results beneficial to the [Ottoman] Empire'.[2] But as the message of the revolution sank in, it was seen as a call to sedition and atheism. The Ottomans were at a loss to comprehend mobilisation on non-religious grounds. Thus, they regarded nationalist ferment as a transient phenomenon, instigated by foreign agitators.[3]

By the time of the French Revolution, the elite of the Greek-speaking *Romioi* had been dominant in the Balkans and Asia Minor. There was the all-powerful Patriarch of Constantinople, a religious and political leader of all the Orthodox Christians of the Empire from the Balkans to Syria and Egypt, which amounted to some 13 million (he was virtually an interior minister for Christian affairs).[4]

Apart from the Patriarch in Constantinople whose prestige was immense, with a virtual court of his own, there were the affluent Phanariots (the Greek or Hellenised quasi-aristocracy in the Ottoman capital, in the Phanar district of the Patriarchate), whose members were mostly educated in European universities, with excellent knowledge of European languages, who were assigned major posts in the Ottoman Empire (for the Ottoman elite until the 1820s knew only Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Arabic).[5] As Christine Philiou has put it the Phanariots 'were engaged in a paradoxical imperial enterprise from the late seventeenth century until 1821', even though this 'rise to power flew in the face of religious dogma and political ideology underpinning Ottoman governance, which forbade Christians a formal share in Ottoman sovereignty'.[6] There were four major offices and several others held since the end of the sixteenth century by male members of the Phanariot families: Grand Dragoman of the court, an office that was 'the liaison between European envoys' and the Sultan and his inner circle,[7] which prior to the post of foreign minister (the *reis effendi*) amounted to a *de facto* foreign

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minister. Second was the Dragoman of the Fleet, the second in command to the admiral of the Ottoman Fleet and *de facto* the administrator of many Aegean islands and Anatolian coastal localities. But there were also, since 1709 (and until 1821) two other even more glamorous offices, that of *hospodars* (princes) in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, whose status was almost equal to that of Grand Vizier (the equivalent of prime minister).[8] According to Cyril Mango, the Phanariots, 'as a class, had carved out for themselves a very comfortable niche in the existing Ottoman system', thus they 'had nothing to gain by changing a system that they had learnt so well to manipulate'.[9]

There were also an array of Greek (or Hellenised) educators and men of letters, as well as wealthy entrepreneurs, manufacturers, merchants, huge landowners (especially in Peloponnese, where they owned one-third of the land), wealthy ship-owners and seamen (especially in the islands of Hydra and Spetses), all of them dominating Ottoman imperial trade by the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.[10] The eighteenth century was in several respects 'the Greek century' of the Ottoman Empire at an educational, economic and social level and this ascendency continued until the eve of the Greek Revolution, with the Greeks de facto autonomous in various regions, especially in the Aegean islands and Peloponnese.[11]

All in all and to use concepts from the study of ethnicity and separatism, the Greek-speaking *Romioi* from the mid-eighteenth century until 1821 were in a state of 'relative (not absolute) disadvantage'[12] or 'rank disequilibrium'.[13] Indeed the Greek case appears to confirm the research finding of one of the authors of this book regarding post-1945 separatist conflicts: that the more 'a group can be characterized as an ethnic group or nation, the more secondary is the role played by the factor of inequality or disadvantage (or, put differently, the lesser the degree of inequality necessary to spawn secession)'.[14] For a separatist struggle to ensue, 'if a stark disadvantage does not exist in the first place it has to be invented',[15] thus most independence movements tend to stress victimhood and discrimination as also amply seen in the Greek case.

Be this as it may, the Greeks and Hellenised with their European connections were well-placed to absorb the message of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Thus, what is later known as the Greek Enlightenment or Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment was spawned in the last decades of the eighteenth century. A considerable number of intellectuals and activists came to regard Ottoman rule as unacceptable and the Greeks as being 'in chains'. The main figures were the major scholar Adamantios Korais from Smyrna/Izmir, who lived in Paris most of his adult life, and the poet and activist Rhigas Velestinlis (see Chapter 1).[16]

As this new definition of the situation took root, the eventual uprising was a matter of time, especially after the founding in Odessa (September 1814) by three merchants of a national revolutionary organisation named *Philiki Etairia* (Friendly Society) that sought to prepare for an uprising with the help of other Balkan peoples and by attracting Russian diplomatic support and

tangible assistance.[17] The *Etairia* made sure to 'put it about, misleadingly if plausibly, that the conspiracy enjoyed the support of Russia'.[18] The *Etairia* approached Ioannis Capodistrias, the then co-Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire, offering him the leadership, but he declined, given his position in Russia, warning his interlocutors that the time was not ripe for an uprising in view of the adverse climate in Europe under the Congress System of five great powers. The leadership of the *Etairia* was then bestowed on Alexandros Ypsilantis (a young major general in the Russian army of Phanariot origins and aide-de-camp of Tsar Alexander I) who accepted the offer (April 1820). He tried to get endorsement from the Tsar, but Alexander politely told him to back off for 'Europe is at peace' and this was also the advice of Capodistrias.[19]

The international situation could hardly have been more unfavourable to the independence aim of the *Etairia*,[20] with the five great powers, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, poised against all forms of insurrection against 'legitimate rule', prepared to even intervene military to thwart them. As for 'the idea of self-determination by national minorities' it was 'almost unheard-of'.[21]

From the end of the eighteenth century until 1821 one can discern no less than four positions as to what is to be done: (1) and all-Balkan independence struggle under Greek aegis (Rhigas, *Philiki Etairia*, Alexander Ypsilantis); (2) a Greek independence struggle (Christoforos Perraivos, Alexander Mavrocordatos, Dimitrios Ypsilantis, Dikaios Papaflessas and others); (3) doing nothing and being content with the existing state of play, not least given the many privileges of the Patriarchate and the *Rum* elite, especially the affluence of the Greeks and Hellenized (Patriarch Gregorios V, the Jerusalem Patriarch Anthimos VI, Athanasios Parios, most Phanariots and others of the so-called 'anti-Enlightenment movement', who regarded an uprising against the Sultan a sin against God and were hostile toward all the principles of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution),[22] which was also the view of several affluent primates, especially in Peloponnese[23]; and (4) putting the idea of an uprising on ice, given the posture of the great powers against all kinds of uprisings against 'legitimate rule', and to strive for independence decades later, if possible via peaceful means (Korais, Capodistrias).[24]

In spite of the bad omens given the posture of the great powers, Ypsilantis launched the Greek independence struggle on 21 February 1821, surprisingly in Moldavia instead of in the Greek-inhabited southern Balkans. In Russian army uniform, he arrived in Jassy (Moldavia) and joined forces with the Phanariot prince of Moldavia, Michael Soutso and the Vlach (Romanian) leader Tudor Vladimirescu (whose men had already taken up arms against the Ottomans). Ypsilantis delivered a proclamation apparently inspired by the European Enlightenment and by Romanticism, calling for a fight for the faith and the fatherland, stressing the 'natural right to freedom'. And he sent a letter to the Tsar writing: 'Will you, Sire, abandon the Greeks to their fate, when a single word from you can deliver them from the most monstrous tyranny and save them of the horrors of a long and terrible struggle?'[25]

Ypsilantis's small army was comprised of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Orthodox Christian Albanians.[26]

The Tsar (then participating in the Laibach Congress of the five great powers) was embarrassed and, though not unsympathetic to Ypsilantis, lent him no support, ordering him to lay down his arms and dismissing him from the Russian army. Even more dramatically, on 4 April 1821, an encyclical was posted in all the Greek churches in Constantinople signed by Patriarch Gregorios, Patriarch Polykarpos of Jerusalem and 21 other prelates, 'excommunicating all those taking part in the revolution against the protector of Christians and lawful sovereign of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan' and a similar encyclical, addressed to all Orthodox Christians 'excommunicating all those who raised arms against the Ottoman government', was issued by Gregorios's successor, Patriarch Evgenios in August 1821.[27] Ypsilantis's conduct in the principalities was a disaster, marked by 'a mixture of vanity, brutality, and incompetence'[28] (he killed hundreds of unarmed Ottoman officials and even ordered the killing of his ally Vladimirescu). By June 1821, the Ottoman army quelled the ill-prepared Greek-led rebellion in Moldavia, at the Battle of Dragashani, with Ypsilantis shamefully fleeing prior to the battle.

As for the Laibach Congress then in session it was taken by surprise upon hearing of the Greek uprising. The Tsar was convinced that it had been masterminded by a sinister 'central governing committee' based in Paris.[29] The Austrian chancellor Clemens von Metternich regarded the Ottomans and Greeks 'beyond the pale of civilization' and hoped that the rebellion would 'burn itself out'.[30] The British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh, France and Prussia, opted for strict neutrality. And the Laibach Congress made sure to denounce the uprising (12 May 1821).[31]

The Greek revolt that was to succeed in 1821–1824 was in Peloponnese (Morea as it was then called) from March 1821 onwards. Peloponnese a rugged area with mountains and highlands (though not as rugged and mountainous as Rumeli to the north), was well-suited for hit-and-run warfare, with an overwhelming Orthodox Christian majority, approximately 400,000 to only 40,000 Muslims (85–90 percent Greek speakers and Albanian speakers),[32] geographically almost cut off from the southern Balkan, in what is a peninsula and at a safe distance from Istanbul. And the Greeks could count on their dominance in the sea due to the many ships of the nearby Albanian-inhabited islands of Hydra and Spetses. Moreover, the war between the Ottomans and Ali Pasha had stranded the elite Ottoman forces, providing a unique opportunity for the Greeks to take up arms (see Chapter 3) and not permitting the Ottomans to nip the rebellion in the bud.[33]

To the Ottoman state, the Greek uprising was utterly unexpected; it was 'as sudden as lightning', according to the words of the Ottoman Foreign Minister.[34] Apparently, the Ottoman state was unaware of the fact that an uprising had been in the making since 1814; or perhaps, as Thomas Gordon has put it 'too proud to be easily alarmed'.[35] As for the *Philiki Etairia* its

existence was barely known, even though Ali Pasha had informed the Ottoman leadership so as to ingratiate himself with Sultan Mahmud II.[36]

The fact that the uprising was regarded as unthinkable given the relevant well-being of the *Rum* in the empire, made Mahmud jump to the conclusion that it was a Russian plot, given also the strong dose of Ottoman 'Russophobia' in 'the Ottoman psyche': that without Russian encouragement and support, the *Rum* would never have contemplated taking up arms.[37] As H. Şükrü Ilıcak has put it[38]:

> Throughout the revolutionary years, Ottoman administrators, especially Mahmud II, considered that Russia posed a more concrete peril than the Greek insurgents and they expected an eventual Russian war, which finally took place in 1828 … official Ottoman documents reflect the deeply established anxieties about the "Russian threat" in the Ottoman psyche. According to the Sublime Porte, Russia was the power conspiring, provoking, and secretly assisting the Greek insurgents, and the Greek communal leadership acted as a Russian fifth column.

However, the Russian Empire at official level was not involved.[39] Stroganoff the Russian envoy in Constantinople who was summoned by the Ottoman Foreign Minister, emphatically denied any Russian involvement,[40] and Russia permitted the Ottoman forces to enter the two principalities and quell the rebellion (under the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest, Russian permission was needed for entry into the Danubian principalities). But Mahmud clung to his belief of Russian involvement (a self-fulfilling prophesy as it turned out) until the end and regarded himself vindicated when Russia did intervene militarily in 1827–1829 in support of the Greeks. In the wake of news of massacres of Muslims in Moldavia and the Peloponnese, the view prevailed that 'the infidel *Rum*', with Russian help, were out to 'trample', 'massacre' and 'God forbid annihilate all Muslims'. As such, the Greeks (actually the *Rum* as a whole) were no longer considered *zimmi* (protected minorities) but *harbi* (anti-Islamic warring groups) and the *zimmet* pact (protection as a result of loyalty) no longer applied.[41]

In the first months of the uprising in Peloponnese 15,000–20,000 out of some 40,000 unarmed Muslims living in the Peloponnese, in the words of George Finlay 'were murdered without mercy or remorse',[42] a tragedy barely noticed in Europe.[43]

Mahmud, unable to punish the perpetrators, vented his fury on the *Rum* nearer at hand,[44] ordering the execution of more than 50 prominent Phanariots, including Grand Dragoman Kostaki Muruzi, and allowing Muslim mobs to slaughter several thousand innocent people in the capital and other cities, and to burn hundreds of churches, acts which left Europe aghast.[45] Another act of the Sultan stunned Europe even more: the hanging on the dawn of Easter Day (22 April 1821) of the venerable Patriarch Gregorios V (and several senior bishops), for he was held responsible for the behaviour of his flock

even though he was innocent. The Austrian Emperor was as shocked as if the Pope had been executed. The Russian population, including the Tsar, were so incensed that a Russo-Ottoman war seemed likely.[46]

In the latter part of 1821 and the first part of 1822, two appalling events took place within seven months. The first was the conquest of Tripolis, on 5–6 October 1821 by the Greeks, amidst a carnage that defies description, with the indiscriminate massacring of 8,000–15,000 unarmed people of all ages. It was then that many philhellenes left the Peloponnese in disgust, such as Colonel Thomas Gordon (the later historian of the Greek uprising). News of this horrifying deed trickled abroad but there was barely any condemnation. The standard line was that the exaggerated Greek reaction was due to the centuries-old 'Turkish yoke'.[47]

The European response was very different in April 1822 when the Ottomans laid waste the affluent island of Chios (Scio). Gordon likened it to the carnage of Tripolis, with 'the victors butchering indiscriminately all who came in their way'.[48] About 25,000 unarmed people were killed and 45,000 enslaved. The European uproar was even greater than in 1821 with the hanging of the Patriarch. Delacroix painted *Scène des massacres de Scio*, causing a sensation when it was unveiled in Paris.[49]

When George Canning succeeded Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary in September 1822, he initially followed his predecessor's neutral policy towards the Greek-Ottoman clash. But in March 1823 he recognised the Greeks as belligerents. The act as such was not pro-Greek but aimed to protect British commerce from piracy and to hold the Greeks accountable for such actions.[50] The Ottoman Foreign Minister did not miss the opportunity to ask the British Ambassador in Constantinople, whether Canning was now prepared to 'allow the right of America to recognize Irish rebels as belligerents'.[51] When Metternich complained, Canning's reaction was that 'monstrous consequences' would follow from treating them as pirates, adding '[c]an it be necessary to suggest the advantage to humanity of bringing within the regulated limits of civilised war, a contest which was marked on its outset on both sides, with disgusting barbarities?'[52]

In the years 1821–1824, the Greeks were able to repulse the Ottoman forces sent against them, though they lost part of their advantage due to two civil wars in 1824. With the Greeks in control of most of the territories south of Thessaly, Mahmud summoned the Governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha (known as Muhammad Ali to the Albanians and to the Egyptians), yet another all-powerful governor of Albanian origin acting as an independent ruler, to quell the Greek revolt. Mehmed Ali, who had reorganised his forces with French technical assistance, sent a navy and army under the command of his very able son Ibrahim Pasha.

In 1821–1822, 'the courts and cabinets of Europe were all but unanimous in deploring the folly of the Greeks', but 'it was quite otherwise with some of their influential subjects'.[53] What made the difference and at the end of the day saved the Greeks, apart from the crucial Albanian dimension to be

discussed later (see Chapter 3), was that the Greek uprising had become an international *cause célèbre*, giving rise to an impressive wave of what came to be known as philhellenism. Greek committees sprung up in various parts of Europe and the US, starting with Spain and Switzerland, concluding with the most influential ones, the London Greek Committee (1823) and the Paris Greek Committee (1825), all of which were engaged in fund-raising, writing pamphlets, securing funds, foodstuffs, medicine, arms and ammunition, as well as paying ransom to free enslaved Greeks (a Russian prerogative). Over a thousand 'philhellenes', Italians, French, English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Swiss, Poles, Scandinavians, Americans, Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch, Hungarians and others came to assist the Greeks in their struggle, including a unique celebrity, Lord Byron, with some of his greatest romantic poems referring to the Greek cause prior to the uprising (notably 'Childe Harold', 'Don Juan' and others).[54]

The philhellenes were convinced of the righteousness of the Greek cause and of the barbarity of the 'Turks'. Thus the atrocities and other barbarous acts committed by the Greeks – the few that were reported – were wished away and had little impact in stemming the enthusiasm. There was strong public pressure from elite circles in Britain (apart from Byron, Shelley, Bentham, Ricardo, Lord Erskine, Lord Russell and others), Russia (a string of poets, including Pushkin), France (Chateaubriand, Hugo, Dumas, Constant, Delacroix, Berlioz, Villemain, Firmin Didot), Switzerland (banker-philanthropist Eynard) and the US (Hellenist Professor Everett, three ex-Presidents, Jefferson, Adams and Madison, and future President Harrison) to assist the beleaguered Greeks. King Ludwig I of Bavaria and President Monroe contemplated recognition of statehood (Madison suggested reference to the Greek cause in the Monroe Doctrine of December 1823) but Secretary of State (and future President) John Quincy Adams, a pragmatist, put an end to any such ventures.[55]

European and American identification with the Greeks was also due to the fact that they were regarded as the descendants of the ancient Greeks, with ancient Greece regarded as 'the cradle of European civilization'. Percy Shelley's words in the preface of his poem 'Hellas' captured the overall mood: 'We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion [*sic*], our art have their roots in Greece. But for Greece … we might still have been savages.… The Modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings'.[56] It was a great advantage to the Greek cause that Europe and America were then under the spell of neo-classicism, which venerated the ancient Greeks. Thus there was strong public pressure, particularly in Britain, France and Russia, to come to the support of the beleaguered Greeks.

For the Russians, the Greeks striving for freedom were the descendants of the Byzantines (to whom they owed Christianity, their alphabet and iconography) as well as the ancient Greeks. Co-religionism brought the support of the Russian Church and of the wider public, even in rural areas, among the illiterate strata and peasants, something unique in Europe at the time. And the

Greeks were very much present in Russia as prosperous merchants, educators and high-ranking civil servants, diplomats, military personnel and members of the aristocracy, several of them close to the Tsar and court, a case in point being Capodistrias and the Ypsilantis family.[57]

In 1824 a unique event was to create a sensation, reviving international public interest in the Greek cause which at the time was waning. Byron, the idol of literary Europe arrived in the city of Messolonghi (in western Rumeli) in January 1824, inspiring romantic Byronists across Europe. After a perilous journey by ship from the Ionian Islands, Byron, in an impressive scarlet military uniform, set foot in Messolonghi to a hero's welcome by an enthusiastic crowd and was made head of the Greek and philhellene troops in western Greece, that came to be known as the 'Byron Brigade'. The motley brigade saw no military action but Byron's mere presence 'electrified' the Greeks and acted as a 'talisman'[58] internationally. Byron displayed practical spirit and assisted the Greeks financially and organisationally. The Byron magic was to reach its apogee a hundred days later when, as C.M. Woodhouse has put it, he 'died immortally'[59] (from illness on 19 April 1824). His death assured the Greek cause thereafter of constant European concern, which was much needed in view of the arrival of Ibrahim and his forces early the next year.[60]

Ibrahim Pasha left Alexandria on 19 July 1824 with an impressive armada of 54 warships and a great number of transport vessels (the total of ships amounting to almost 400), and after many stops in the littoral of Asia Minor and Crete (at times because of engagements with Greek battleships) he landed at the port of Methoni on 11 February 1825. With the bay of Navarino as his naval base, he embarked upon a campaign of conquest and devastation, though initially he refrained from indiscriminate killings of the unarmed, women or children, and showed clemency, allowing those who surrendered to leave unmolested, in order to make the point that surrender was better than resistance.[61] The Greek fighters, who had recently experienced two disastrous civil wars, were no match for his military acumen and his small but well-disciplined army. By the end of the year, the Greek independence war was on its last ebb, with only a few pockets of resistance intact, Messolonghi, Athens, Nauplion and the islands of Hydra, Spetses, Poros and Aegina. [62]

The Greeks were in a desperate situation and it was clear that only great power intervention could save them. Thus it was that at the end, as M. S. Anderson has put it, the Greeks 'were to be rescued, though in an unplanned and even reluctant way, by the great powers'.[63]

The Greeks, 'at their last gasp' in exasperation placed themselves in 1825 by an 'Act of Submission' under the protection in turn of Britain, France and Russia, which was turned down.[64] A Greek delegation met Canning (29 September 1825), who did not accept the protectorate idea, but added pointedly that 'there might be a point in the contest when Great Britain would promote a fair and safe compromise'[65] and that 'Britain would not force upon the Greeks a settlement not to their liking'.[66] The deputies' reply was 'independence or death'.[67]

At this juncture an ugly hearsay was to prove salutary for the Greek cause: that Ibrahim intended to depopulate the Peloponnese and re-people it with Muslims from Egypt. This was conveyed by the Russian envoy in London, Ambassador Christoph von Lieven and his formidable wife Dorothea Lieven, who were in close terms with Canning, when they met him privately at Seaford (25 October 1825). They told him that '[t]he Court of Russia has positive information' that Ibrahim had been instructed by the Porte 'to remove the whole Greek population, carrying them off into slavery in Egypt or elsewhere, and to re-people the country with Egyptians and others of the Mohammedan religion'.[68]

The 'barbarisation project' (as dubbed by Canning), although almost certainly smoke without a fire, was crucial in setting the pace for eventual military intervention on behalf of the Greeks. What is clear is that the Lievens had cleverly used the rumour to trigger British involvement.[69] As Harold Temperley has put it, this sinister project, 'whether deemed true or false, whether invented by Greeks or Russians, proved eventually stronger than the soldiers or victories of Ibrahim'.[70] Put differently, true or not, the tendency on the part of Russia and Britain was 'to hang' the barbarisation project on the 'Turks' and act accordingly, taking decisive steps, such as binding agreements that in their implementation were to get the Greeks out of the hook.[71] Moreover, the rumour spread in Europe rousing the philhellenes to intensify their effort to deliver the Greeks.[72]

Canning regarded the project unlikely but could hardly treat such a monstrosity lightly for he was aware that the British public would not tolerate it and would call for drastic action as never before.[73] According to Canning's private secretary and confidant, Augustus Granville Stapleton,[74]

> [i]t was not until the mode in which hostilities were conducted by the Turkish general, Ibrahim Pacha (*sic*), became at variance with the recognised rules of civilized warfare, so as to give every European State a right of war against Turkey that the Foreign Secretary 'entertained the idea of a forcible intervention'.

Ibrahim and the *reis effendi* (the Ottoman Foreign Minister) when asked by the British denied carrying out any such project.[75] However, the way Ibrahim was conducting the war left little doubt that this was a war of submission or death, be it by the sword or hunger.[76] Moreover, it was established that a number of Greeks had been sent into slavery in Egypt and were made to convert to Islam, as Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador in Constantinople informed his cousin, Canning.[77]

In the last months of 1825 Tsar Alexander, feeling deserted by the other powers, decided to resort to war 'as the only means of compelling Turkey to enter into an arrangement respecting Greece'.[78] Apparently only Foreign Minister Nesselrode in the Russian cabinet, was opposed to this course of

action.[79] But Alexander died unexpectedly at Taganrog (December 1825), and Nicholas I took over as Tsar in the midst of the Decembrist Revolt.

The new Tsar had no liking for the Greeks, whom he regarded as rebels against legitimate rule,[80] but was prepared to use the Greek question to Russia's advantage given its many grievances with the Porte. He stated that he wanted to bring an end to the crisis of the Eastern Question, on the basis of an agreement with all the allies, but that if an agreement was not forthcoming, Russia was prepared to act alone.[81] Under the circumstances Canning decided to act resolutely, together with Russia, to avert a Russo-Ottoman war and by the same token save the Greeks.[82]

The outcome was the Anglo-Russian Protocol of St Petersburg signed on 4 April 1826 by the Duke of Wellington on the British side (who had been sent by Canning to St. Petersburg) and, on the Russian side, by both Nesselrode and Lieven.[83] The Protocol offered mediation to the Porte, which if accepted, would lead to the creation of an autonomous Greece tributary to the Sultan. The Protocol made it quite clear that mediation was not to be forced upon the Porte. It was understood that even if Russia opted for war, the agreement would not be dissolved.[84]

In the very month of the adoption of the Protocol, Messolonghi fell to Ibrahim mainly as a result of starvation. The conquest of a town famous due to Byron's death, created a sensation, sending shockwaves around the world.[85] Ibrahim may have won a decisive victory, but Messolonghi had become a symbol for the European publics that called upon their governments to rescue the Greeks. An array of poems, songs, musical plays, essays and sermons, appeared especially in France, the German states and Switzerland. Hugo wrote a macabre poem, 'The Seraglio Heads', in which Ibrahim is presented as sending to the Sultan a gift of 6,000 severed heads. Within three months Delacroix had completed his painting, *Grèce sur les ruines de Messolonghi*, and the next year the Paris Salon exhibition presented 21 paintings with Greek themes.[86]

Meanwhile efforts were made to draw into the Protocol the other three great powers. Russia wanted to secure the widest participation. Canning was keen to secure French support and visited Paris privately, in September-October 1826 for six weeks, to woo King Charles X and Prime Minister Villèle, and both were forthcoming.[87] Predictably Austria was opposed, and Metternich called the Protocol 'an aberration'.[88]

The final outcome was the Treaty of London (6 July 1827) signed by Britain (Prime Minister Canning), France and Russia. The justification of the Treaty was stated in the preamble: 'putting an end to the sanguinary struggle' which has led to 'the disorders of anarchy'; 'fresh impediments to the commerce of the States of Europe and gives opportunity for acts of Piracy'; 'putting a stop to the effusion of blood'; 're-establish peace between the contending parties by means of an arrangement called for, no less by sentiments of humanity, than by interests for the tranquility of Europe'.[89] Although

stopping the effusion of blood was not the only justification, it is probably the first time in world history that such concern was invoked *expressis verbis* as 'a justification for intervention'.[90] The Treaty offered three-power mediation, called for an immediate armistice and provided for the creation of Greece as 'a dependency of Turkey'.

The *Realpolitik* reasons for the Treaty were for France to keep Britain and Russia in check; Britain to restrain Russia from going to war and gaining advantage from the situation; and Russia to avail itself of the opportunity to gain advantages. Accordingly to Crawley 'the mutual suspicion of the Powers was the Greeks' best security: no one of them was concerned to make Greece an independent State (Canning himself gave no clear indication of it) but each was driven in that direction by the fear of allowing the other an excuse for further interference'.[91]

By July 1827, when the Treaty was signed, 'the war was as good as won' by the Ottomans and Egyptians, but, as Turkish scholars 'reasonably claim', 'the victory was snatched out of their hands'.[92]

Following the London Treaty an unexpected event was to take place, which, in retrospect, is seen as an early manifestation of what a little later, in the nineteenth century, came to be known as 'humanitarian intervention'[93]: the naval battle of Navarino (October 1827), in which a joint naval force of British, French and Russian battleships, headed by Vice Admiral Edward Codrington totally destroyed the Egyptian-Ottoman fleet.[94]

Clearly, the naval battle of Navarino had come about 'by accident rather than design',[95] but it 'strengthened enormously the position of the Greeks'.[96] By the end of 1827, the fate of Greece was sealed, or so it seems with the benefit of hindsight, in view of the London Treaty, Navarino, continued Ottoman intransigence, Russia's willingness to go to war, unremitting pressure from France on its two allies to allow France to send an expeditionary force to expel Ibrahim, and Capodistrias as President in Greece, with his diplomatic skills and international links. Only two things remained unresolved: whether Greece was to be autonomous or independent, and its geographical limits. Yet it took three more gruelling years of efforts to make the Greek dream and the Ottoman nightmare a reality. As regards frontiers no less than four alternatives were entertained: Volos-Akheloos, Thermopylae-Parnassos, northern boundaries of Attica or Isthmus of Corynth with only Peloponnese becoming the new state of Greece.[97]

Meanwhile the French pressed on for a joint Franco-British expedition force and at the end was able to make Wellington (who had succeeded Canning who had died) reluctantly accept a French expedition force to be sent in the name of the three allies. Fourteen thousand soldiers were sent under General Nicolas Maison and arrived in Peloponnese in September 1828. The task of the French general had been made easier because a few days before his arrival Codrington had travelled to Egypt where he was able to convince Mehmed Ali to withdraw his forces with the exception of 1,200 that were to

remain in certain fortresses.[98] Maison was given the pleasure of throwing out these 1,200 soldiers by mock assaults after which they surrendered (only in two cases did French batteries open fire for a while), and his soldiers were left doing much-needed work of a non-military nature, such as reconstructing roads, houses and fortresses and organising relief.[99]

There followed a key event that was to save the Greeks, the Russo-Ottoman War which started in April 1828 but raged far longer than had been anticipated, due to stiff resistance by the Ottomans (though strictly speaking the Greek cause was not the main triggering event for the war).[100] The Treaty of Adrianople (14 September 1829) made the Porte accept an autonomous Greece. This time it was the turn of the Greeks under Capodistrias to reject the tributary status. Wellington opted for an independent though small Greece, as did Metternich, so as to limit Russian influence which they both felt would be greater if Greece was an autonomous principality.[101] In Britain when Wellington lost the elections in November 1829, the new Government of Earl Grey, with Foreign Secretary Viscount Palmerston was far more favourable to the Greeks.[102]

On 3 February 1930, at the London Conference, a protocol was signed making Greece independent. Another London Protocol (8 April 1830) referred to the 'frightful calamities to humanity', which made the internationalisation of the problem inevitable.[103] Following the assassination of Capodistrias in 1831, Greece became a kingdom under Otto, the son of King Ludwig of Bavaria. On 7 May 1832, a treaty was signed by the three powers and Bavaria which fixed the frontier in the south of the Amvrakikos-Pagasitikos gulfs. Greek independence and its frontiers were accepted by the Porte in a Convention signed in Constantinople (21 July 1832).[104] Clearly the independence of Greece, as the first *stricto sensu* nation-state in Europe was a major achievement, bringing nationalism and the principle of nationalities to the fore and had several imitators in the Balkans and beyond.[105] But the new state embraced only a third of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, which was to spawn in the mid-century the irredentist *Megali Idea* (Great Idea, see Chapter 4) that was to be Greece's dominant expansionist ideology until 1922.[106]

Notes

1 The bibliography of the Greek War of Independence is legion, particularly in Greece. The two most recent volumes in English timed to appear in the 200 year anniversary of the start of the Greek Revolution (1821), both of them of considerable value, are by Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Constantinos Tsoukalas (eds), *The Greek Revolution: A Critical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021) and by Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).
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3 *Ibid.*, 53–5, 62, 65–7.

4 Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 15.
5 Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 39–82; Cyril Mango, 'The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition', in Richard Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), 41–59. See also George Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861), vol. I, 9–14, 21; L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Co, 2000) [1958], 270–2; Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations* (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983), 24, 32–3, 36; Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Mathuen & Co, 1977), 110–1; Raphael Demos, 'The Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment (1750–1821)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19:4 (1958), 529–30.
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8 *Ibid*., 46–7, 60–2, 71; Mango, 'The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition', 43–8; Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2005) [2000], 80–1.
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11 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 130–2; John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *Modern Greece* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Prager, 1968), 40, 50; Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 274–8; Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 110–1; Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 21–6; Padelis Lekas, 'The Greek War of Independence from the Perspective of Historical Sociology', *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 2 (2005), 170–4; Christopher L. Kinley, 'Imagining a Nation: Society, Regionalism, and National Identity in the Greek War of Independence', *Madison Historical Review*, 13 (2016), 58–60.
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25 Quoted in Woodhouse, *Capodistria*, 252.

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34 Ilicak, 'The Revolt of Alexandros Ipsilantis and the Fate of the Fanariots in Ottoman Documents', 320.
35 Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 39.
36 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 124; Dennis N. Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha's Last Gamble', in Diamandouros et al. (eds), *Hellenism and the First Greek War of Liberation (1821–1830)*, 99; Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 74.
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38 *Ibid*., 64–5.
39 According to Woodhouse the Moldavia uprising 'probably enjoyed at least the connivance of members of the Russian court, although the Tsar Alexander I officially disowned it'. See Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence*, 42. For evidence of possible knowledge of the upcoming events by Capodistrias and even the Tsar, see C.M. Woodhouse, 'Kapodistrias and the Philiki Etairia, 1814–21', in Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, 104–31. What is certain is that there was a level of assistance, logistics, financial support and aid in finding arms by Russian officials and officers in southern Russia without clearance from the Imperial Government. See Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution* , 8–26; G.F. Jewsbury, 'The Greek Question [The View from Odessa, 1815–1822]', *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 4: 4 (1999), 751–5; Ilicak, 'The Revolt of Alexandros Ipsilantis and the Fate of the Fanariots in Ottoman Documents', 324.
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42 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 172.
43 *Ibid*., vol. I, 172, 181–8, 261–3; William St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008) [1973], 1–2, 7, 12; Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Intervention in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914. The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 65–6.
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3 Greek-Albanian entanglements during the Greek Revolution

Introduction: the Albanian dimension

The Greek revolutionaries of 1821–1830 were by no means a homogeneous group in terms of their origin, social class and aims, and in how they envisaged the political future of an autonomous or independent state.[1] One of the most striking differences, given that the struggle was made in Greece's name was that the protagonists were of varying ethnic and linguistic origins, a majority were Greek speakers or Hellenised but a considerable number (perhaps one third) were Albanian speakers, some were Vlach speakers or Bulgarian speakers and other Slavic speakers, and there was even a handful of Serbian speakers (Serbs and Montenegrins), all of them excelling 'in the annals of Greek patriotism'.[2]

The years 1821–1830 were to experience the first major entanglement between Greeks and Albanians in a very unusual manner by the standards of modernity. The Albanians were split into two parts: the Christian Orthodox Albanians south of Janina and Mount Olympus, all of them Tosks, fought or were activists and politicians with the Greeks though not for the freedom of Albania or for the creation of an Albanian-Greek state, but for the liberation of Greece, as *de facto* Greeks.[3] As put by Romilly Jenkins[4]:

> In the struggle for Greek independence during the early nineteenth century, none was more wholehearted in the cause of Freedom than the Albanians; and the most glorious exploits of the Greek navy in that war were devised and executed by them. The language of the Greek Naval Command might be Albanian; but the sentiments expressed in it were worthy of Pericles and Demosthenes.

The Muslim Tosks and the Muslim Ghegs fought as officers or mercenaries in the Ottoman Army against the Greeks and their Christian Orthodox ethnic kin.

Until a few years ago, this unique case of multiple entanglements has not been given its due, with very few exceptions. On the part of the Greeks and Albanians, including scholars, there has been an obvious reluctance to touch upon what is after all a sensitive matter, which hardly tallies with their respective national narratives, hence the oblivion.

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As put by Mark Mazower, 'Perhaps the most important thing to realize about the war of 1821 is that it was not really a two-way Greco-Turkish struggle at all', there was the 'often decisive role played in the conflict by the Albanians, both Christian and Muslim'.[5]

The Orthodox Christian Albanian-speaking seamen of Hydra and Spetses were to provide the core of the Greek fleet from the very beginning.[6] The Orthodox Christian Tosks, those who lived 'in Greece proper or among the Greeks, particularly those of Peloponnesus, descendants of the Albanians who emigrated there during the fourteenth century'[7] fought with the Greeks for Greek independence, to which from 1822 onwards, were added the Christian Chams of Epirus, mainly the Souliots. However, the Orthodox Albanians 'of Albania proper did not participate' for two reasons: 'they were surrounded by Moslems' and any revolt on their part would have been doomed and 'they possessed an Orthodox Christian consciousness but not a Greek national consciousness'.[8]

In order to fully understand the mobilisation for or against the Greeks in the Greek Revolution of the Albanian speakers it needs to be stressed that for them the source of collective identity was pre-modern, it was religious identity and not an ethnic or national one. The latter concepts were for them, as for the Ottomans, incomprehensible. Characteristically the Greek-speaking Catholics of the Aegean Islands and the Greek-speaking Muslims of Macedonia did not participate as Greeks or otherwise in the Greek Revolution.[9]

The Muslim Tosks (and many Ghegs) fought as officers and soldiers (mainly as mercenaries) in the Ottoman Army and Navy. Worth stressing is that the Albanians 'constituted the backbone' of the Ottoman forces in Europe.[10] Yet as we shall see, their stance as foes of the Greeks was most of the time not straightforward, it was not a war against 'infidel seditionists' as conceived by the Sublime Porte, but nuanced to such an extent that one can speak of an intricate special relationship between on the one hand Muslim Tosks and on the other hand Greeks and Christian Tosks.

In fact the Muslim Tosks did not immediately become rivals, fighting against the Greeks and their Christian Tosk ethnic kin, but did so from early 1822 onwards, when they had no other realistic alternative in view of the following: (a) Ali Pasha's demise (January 1822) that left them without an Albanian leader whom they revered and having to atone to the Porte for having fought in his ranks against the Ottomans; (b) having realised towards the end of 1821 that they could not count on an alliance with the Greeks (*Romioi*) which had been previously agreed upon (see further down), for the Greek struggle was decidedly 'Christian' and 'Greek'; and (c) given the fact that the Sultan had declared a *cihad* (holy war against the infidels) which left them with little leeway, though they did their utmost, as we shall see, on several occasions to wriggle themselves out of their predicament.

But let us commence our story with the Greeks and Albanians as 'close brethren' and comrades in arms.

The Orthodox Albanian Tosks: a common struggle for Greek independence

Many Hellenised Albanians, Vlachs and Bulgarians 'become the most dedicated of Greek patriots' in 1821–1830, serving as military, diplomatic envoys, politicians 'or in other capacities for the Greek cause'.[11] But Hellenisation per se was by no means 'a prerequisite for the many Albanians fighting on the side of the Greeks'.[12]

The Orthodox Christian Tosks were brothers and co-fighters on an equal basis with the Greeks (*Romioi*) without any discrimination or difference in status or prestige. The various infightings and civil wars (two in fact) that did take place prior to the arrival of Ibrahim Pasha had no Greek-Christian Albanian dimension whatsoever.[13]

Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of other independence wars, such as the American Revolution of 1776–1780 with George Washington as 'a unifying personality',[14] the Latin Americans (Simon Bolivar, José San Martin and others), the Haitians (Toussaint Louverture) or the Serbs (Karađorđe Petrović followed by Miloš Obrenović) and in 1848 the Hungarians (Lajos Kossuth) or the Cubans in 1895–1898 (Máximo Gómez seconded by Antonio Maceo), will be at a loss with the Greek independence war. The situation appears and was chaotic at the military level, with a striking array of generals, admirals, *kapetanioi* (military leaders or sea captains) and equally anarchic and disconcerting at the political level until the salutary arrival of Ioannis Capodistrias in January 1828.

Under the circumstances it is akin to a miracle that the Greeks achieved their goal, though not the 'whole of Greece' which they felt they were entitled to (that included at least Thessaly). This miracle can be attributed to a considerable extent to philhellenism and its spill-over effect, the resulting beneficial diplomatic and military involvement of the three great powers (see Chapter 2). Undoubtedly, it should also be attributed to the Albanian factor, primarily to the Albanian Tosks on the Greek side, who formed a fourth to a third of the army and the greatest part of the naval forces, and about half of the ablest and most respected military commanders.[15] One should also bear in mind that as one Greek specialist has put it, if there was 'a military school of war' in Epirus and to the south in the course of the Greek Revolution, this was based on 'the war habits of the Albanians', the Greeks were mere 'trainees'.[16]

In the southern Balkans, in the region that was to be 'liberated' and become the first Greek state, the Albanian Orthodox Christian Tosks amounted to a fourth of the population (the Albanian speakers were a fourth of the population in independent Greece until 1912). Only a very small minority among them were Muslim Tosks until 1821. The Greeks tended to call the Christian Tosks 'Arvanites' and the Muslim Albanians 'Turkish-Albanians' (*Turk-Alvanoi*).[17]

To the west of Janina in today's Greek Thesprotia were the four mountainous villages (later 11 villages) of Souli, where the Souliots lived (who were

Christian Orthodox Chams) divided into 47 clans, the most important of which were 12. Two of them, the most powerful and influential were at odds with each other, the Botzari and the Tzavela clans (with various vendettas existing between them). The Souliot contribution in the Greek war of independence was of considerable importance.[18]

The most renowned fighters in the Greek land forces who were Albanians (Arvanites according to the Greeks) were the Souliot generals Marcos Botzaris, his uncle Notis Botzaris and Kitsos Tzavelas,[19] the Rumeliot General Odysseas Androutsos, the Morean General Dimitris Plapoutas and the Rumeliots Dimitris Panourgias (Xiros) and Yiannis Gouras. The most renowned naval leaders who were Albanians from Hydra, included Admiral Andreas Miaoulis (Vokos), Admiral Iakovos Yiakoumakis (Tobazis), Captain Anastasios Tsamados, Captain Georgis Sahtouris and Captain Antonios Kriezis, and from Spetses Captain Hadziyiannis Mexis and the most famous lady-fighter, Captain Laskarina Bouboulina (Pinotsi). Many Arvanites were very active as politicians during the Greek Revolution and in the independent Greek state, a case in point being the ship-owner brothers Lazaros and Georgios Koundouriotis from Hydra, the latter heading for almost three years the Revolutionary Government before the arrival of Capodistrias.

There is also the case of Theodoros Kolokotronis, the most famous General of the independence war, who may or may not have been of Albanian origin, who as most of the fighters, be they Albanians of Greeks, spoke fluent Albanian. The Albanians today are absolutely convinced that he was Albanian, the Greeks that he was Greek. Some Greek commentators, such as historian Yianis Yianoulopoulos or politician Theodoros Pangalos (of Arvanite origin)[20] believe that he was probably of Albanian origin, something disputed even by several non-nationalist Greeks specialists. Another possibility is that he may have been Hellenised, being an off-shoot of the early fourteenth-century wave of Albanian migrants, many of which were Hellenised wholly or in part.

The Greeks in their present-day national historical narrative have forgotten, or more accurately have deliberately chosen to forget, that a striking number of the heroic figures fighting for Greek independence whom they commemorate, were ethnically Albanians. They 'baptize' all of them collectively as 'Greeks', even though their mother tongue was undoubtedly an Albanian Tosk dialect. Albanians are referred to as Albanians only in the case of a handful of Muslim Albanian speakers who fought on the Greek side for reasons of their own. Another Greek device throughout the nineteenth century was to regard the Arvanites as Greeks, as part of the 'Greek race' or Greek nation. But during the nineteenth century the Greeks, including national historian Paparrigopoulos (see Chapter 4), did not choose to forget, but fully acknowledged the great contribution of the Albanian-speakers in the Greek Revolution.[21]

The Albanians from the late nineteenth century until today, in their national narrative, as one would have expected do not forget the role of their

ancestors in the Greek struggle for independence. And they refer with pride to the Souliots, and to the admirals and captains of Hydra and Spetses, including Miaoulis, Bouboulina, and also to Kolokotronis and others,[22] claiming that half or more of the heroic fighters were Albanians. And they tend to present the events as amounting to 'a civil war' between Orthodox Christians and Muslim Albanians and the success of the revolution as mainly a Christian Albanian achievement.[23]

Given this Albanian narrative, the Albanians have difficulty answering the following key question: why in view of what had occurred in the years 1821–1830, with the Albanians as co-protagonists in the genesis of the new state and later as important figures in the Kingdom of Greece, the outcome had not been the creation of '*Arvanitia*' (of an Orthodox Christian Albanian state), or of a 'large Albania' and of a 'small Greece' or at least of an Albanian-Greek state on equal basis? Why has the outcome been a 'large Greece' by comparison to a 'small Albania' almost a century later?

The Albanians are aware, as seen in their more serious writings yesterday and today, that the Arvanites were not fighting for Albanian but for Greek independence, but they are at pains to explain why a victorious independence struggle, which according to them was mainly an Albanian achievement, ethnic and linguistic identity did not carry the day.[24] The obvious answer is of course that these events had taken place when a Greek sense of national identity was in full swing, while Albanian national identity was non-existent and came to the fore more than half a century later, with the Albanians in 1800–1830 and until the early 1870s living in a pre-modern era, in which religious affinity and clan loyalties prevailed.

The Muslim Albanians: restrained antagonism and subtle collaboration

The ambivalence and *sui generis* entanglements between on the one hand Greeks and Orthodox Albanian Tosks and on the other the Muslim Albanian Tosks can be divided into four phases: (I) 1820 – February 1821, the role of Ali Pasha prior to the advent of the Greek Revolution and his courting of the Greeks; (II) 1821, the formal alliance of the Greeks, Christian Tosks (including the Souliots) and Muslim Tosks all three on the side of Ali Pasha; (III) 1822–1824, the aftermath of the alliance and the period until the arrival of Ibrahim and (IV) the final period from 1825 until the endgame in 1830.

In the first two phases, as Douglas Dakin has put it, Ali Pasha 'a life-long intriguer', who 'was a friend and an enemy to everyone' was a central figure,[25] and the 'tangled story of his life became interwoven with the history of the Greeks'.[26] Indeed his 'colourful career belongs to Greek as well as Turkish history'[27] and we would add Albanian history as well. Thus before examining the four phases some preliminaries are in order regarding Ali Pasha which are of relevance with what was to ensue especially in the first two phases.

In the second decade of the nineteenth century and up to 1820, Ali Pasha (known as the 'Lion of Janina' or as the 'Muslim Bonaparte') seemed to be at the height of his power.[28] His huge autonomous state, larger than the small Kingdom of Greece of 1830–1881, was multi-ethnic, but Janina 'emerged as a cultural Greek Orthodox center'.[29] Indeed foreigners and newcomers visiting Janina and the Pashalik were stricken with 'the openness Ali manifested towards the Greeks'[30]: his personal physician Georgios Sakellarios was Greek, as was Ioannis Kolettis (a Hellenised Vlach) the physician of his elder son, Mukhtar, his two secretaries, Manthos Oikonomou and Spiros Kolovos were among the most powerful figures at his court, Alexis Noutsos was a trusted confidant and many of his bodyguards were Greeks, not to mention his beautiful youthful wife, Vassiliki Kontaxi (known as Kyra Vasiliki).[31]

Greek and not Ottoman Turkish or Albanian (his mother tongue) was the official language of the court, of administration and of official correspondence and Ali's court was largely Greek.[32] Even more striking was the fact that Ali's Pashalik, with Janina as its centre become the venue where the Greek language and education flourished as nowhere else in the Ottoman Balkans, giving rise to 'a Greek renaissance'.[33] Famous secondary schools of Greek, the best in the Balkans (one with 100 scholars teaching, the other with 300) were established funded by the Zosimas brothers, with first-class intellectuals as teachers, such as the Psalidas, Sakellarios, who was also a scholar, having penned several well-known works, with Kolettis having written and translated scientific works for use in the schools.[34] Indeed one witnesses the unusual phenomenon of 'a non-Greek, non-Christian ruler who made significant contributions to Hellenism and of Christianity'.[35]

Given the above as well as Ali's consistent policy of 'excluding Turks from all positions of authority and relying exclusively on Greeks and Albanians', had as a result led 'many of his own Greek advisors and military commanders to believe that he might be won over to the idea of becoming the monarch of an independent Greco-Albanian state;'[36] and, as we shall see, they tried to sell him this idea and on the surface he was not adverse, though he was probably not sincere in this regard.[37]

By and large as Ali grew older he ruled mainly through his sons as well as via a network of Albanian beys, Greek notables and chieftains who were known to other Greeks as *Alipashalides* (Ali Pasha's men) and crucially, 'their long and intimate knowledge of one another survived his death, crossed religious divides, and shaped the course of the Greek uprising'.[38]

Phase I, 1820 – February 1821

As Mazower has put it, '[i]n the history of the Greek revolution, Ali Pasha was to play a vital role, though not the one he had wanted'.[39] At the very least his clash with the Porte 'had encouraged the Greeks to revolt' at that precise historical moment and by 'tying down large moment Ottoman forces, he had enabled the Greeks to get a firm footing in the Morea'.[40]

As the day of reckoning with the Sultan seemed inevitable, Ali tried time-honoured devices that had worked in previous dealings with the Porte, such as bribing top officials (Ali was known to own a huge treasure). Apparently, his plan A was to remain in place as the governor of a semi-independent entity under the nominal sovereignty of the empire. But when he realised by late 1819 that the Sultan was bent on destroying him at all costs, he switched to plan B: appealing for Greek support, having been aware of the existence of the *Philiki Etairia* since at least 1818. By doing so he also hoped to gain Russian support against the Porte, for he believed, as many people erroneously did at the time, that the *Etairia* was a Russian instrument.[41] In 1819 he approached Capodistrias who was then on visit to Corfu, but he advised him to remain loyal to the Sultan, then in quest of common ground with the Greeks he entered into a correspondence with Bishop Ignatius, a highly respected and major figure of the *Etairia*.[42]

For the *Etairia* the idea of cooperating with Ali Pasha was not novel. Several people in its top echelons had toyed with the idea of converting Ali to Christianity and having him head the future revolution.[43] And the *Etairia* people dealings with him 'gave him the code name Father-in-Law, which summed up all the intimate ambiguities of their relationship'.[44] Leadership of the revolution or not, the *Etairia* was fully aware of Ali's value as a much needed distraction in the case of an armed clash with the Sultan's army. Indeed had the Ottomans not put as their priority crushing Ali 'the fate of the Greek uprising would have been very different'.[45] When the uprising started in the Morea (Peloponnese) the Ottomans 'ignored the Greeks, even to the extent of allowing them to consolidate their gains', regarding Ali as 'the chief danger' and not the Greeks.[46] They believed that Ali was behind the Greek uprising as well and thus 'underestimated the Greeks and as long as Ali remained alive, the Sultan's attention and his military effort remained fixed on the mountains of the western Balkans and the pasha's base in the town of Jannina'.[47] However, 'from the Pasha's vantage point it was the Greek revolution that would provide the diversion', being at 'odds with the Sultan, he needed the Greeks more than they needed him.[48]

In 1820, Ali took various steps to render himself more popular with the Greeks, such as reducing taxes, cancelling debts and the like. He even convened a series of public assemblies from April until June 1820 that were attended by all the leading *kapetanioi*, primates and Orthodox prelates of Rumeli, in which he addressed them as would a monarch 'a parliament' and not 'a despot his subjects', speaking of freedom for Greece and of 'restoring the Empire of the Romans'.[49] He pledged to grand his subjects a 'constitution' and sent one of his trusted secretaries to Corfu to procure such a document. And he stated that if he was victorious over the Sultan, his state would include southern Albania, Epirus and Thessaly, with the Morea and central Greece autonomous states under his protection.[50] However what he understood by a constitution is not clear, for he wrote to Metternich, 'the least

constitutionally minded European ruler', requesting 'that he prepare one on his behalf'.[51] It may have been, as Katherine Fleming has suggested, that '[t]o him a constitution was something one offered to subject peoples as a gesture of appeasement when they made nationalist rumblings',[52] and she makes the point that: 'Ali, master of the symbolic, cleverly used such signifiers of the West in his ongoing attempts to re-create himself in the image of what he imagined that West to be'.[53]

The pasha's Greek advisors and confidants, the fighter Androutsos as well as the influential Bishop Ignatios 'urged him to convert to Christianity, arguing that this would bind the Greeks more solidly to the cause'.[54] In the meantime, Ali contacted Vlasopoulos, the Consul General of Russia in Patras and met with his plenipotentiary Paparrigopoulos (30 April 1820), who happened to be an old acquaintance of Ali.[55] The pasha frankly told him that that he has spent large sums of money in the capital to convince the Sultan not to come after him, but to no avail. Thus, he now calls upon Tsar Alexander for aid and stated that he would be loyal to him, making the point that if the Greeks were informed of the Tsar's support they would come to assist him against the Sultan.[56]

The Ottoman attack commenced in late August 1820 under General Ismail Pasha, with Ali initially in dire straits retreating to his island stronghold in the Janina lake. A major drawback was the betrayal of Ali's main and most formidable Albanian commander, the battle-hardened General Omer Vrioni Pasha, who with 15,000 elite troops joined Ismail's army, regarding Ali's demise inevitable and all resistance doomed.[57] There was panic in Janina where Ali was left with a few thousand faithful followers, and some 200 pieces of artillery though with a strong flotilla in Lake Janina.[58]

But Ali's position was not as desperate as it seemed in the beginning.[59] Until late October 1820, the local Albanian chieftains were non-committal, waiting to see which side would gain the upper hand.[60] More crucially, in December 1820, the formidable Souliots who had sided with the Ottomans felt unfairly treated by Ismail and switched sides allying with their former arch-enemy Ali, who promised them safe return to their mountain villages in Souli, a fortress in Kiafa, money for their families residing in the Ionian Islands and other rewards.[61]

In January 1821, some 1,500 Souliots arrived to fight for Ali Pasha together with a considerable number of Muslim Tosks, headed by major Albanian notables, such Eliaz Bey, Ziliftar Poda (or Seliktar Boda), who had been Ali's right-hand man and sword-bearer, Ago Muhurdar Besiari (or Basiari) and Tahir Abbas (or Abatzi). On 27 January they agreed with the Souliot captains Marko Botzari, Noti Botzari, Kitso Tzavela and others, for a common struggle to save Ali Pasha, vouching that they were brothers in arms 'in soul and body' and were prepared to spill their blood; and the Souliots and the Muslim Albanians true to their word launched their attack against the Ottomans and their communications.[62] In the very same month major

kapetanioi of Rumeli, including Odysseas Androutsos, Giorgos Varnakiotis, Stergios Stournaris, Dimitris Makris, Georgios Karaiskakis and others, agreed to join Ali's forces, in what was now an offensive alliance against the Ottomans.[63]

Apparently Ali's 'final gamble' had paid off at least for the time being.[64] As a result, the Ottoman forces found themselves on the defensive and decided to abandon the operation temporarily. They used the winter interval in quest of a more capable commander-in-chief than the incompetent Ismail Pasha, who was to be none other than the very capable and battle-hardy Khurshid Pasha (previously Grand Vizier and Pasha of Morea since 1820, who had crushed the Serbian Revolution).[65]

Meanwhile the *Etairia* sent Perraivos, an important figure of the *Etairia*, who had been an associate of the legendary Rhigas and was a close friend of the Souliots since the early 1800s, to co-opt them. The Souliot chieftains knew nothing about the *Etairia* when Perraivos handed them a letter written by Alexander Ypsilantis addressing them as 'the brave leaders of the Greek armies', urging them to show the world that they were descendants 'of the glorious heroes of Marathon and Thermopylae'.[66] In fact, as Mazower points out, 'nationalism was an entirely alien concept to these Christian Albanians and they certainly did not see themselves as leading "Greek armies"'.[67] The following year in a confidential message to the Tsar, they wrote that 'we don't have anything in common with the other Greeks'[68] ('other Greeks' probably meaning other members of the *Rum millet*). Indeed, they 'felt generally closer to their fellow Albanian Muslims than they did to the Greeks' and they placed more trust on Perraivos than on Ypsilantis's rhetoric.[69]

Phase II, 1821

When Ali heard of the Greek uprising he sent his friend and counsellor Alexis Noutsos, on missions to the Greeks, the offer being the creation of 'a Greek-Albanian state under Ali's sovereignty' but nothing came of this.[70] Meanwhile in the summer of 1821, General Dimitrios Ypsilantis (the younger brother of Alexander Ypsilantis) addressed the Muslim Albanians, the 'brave Tosks' as he called them to join his forces.[71] But something else occurred which was to say the least 'mind-boggling', to use Mazower's expression.[72] The original Souliot-Albanian alliance was broadened in September 1821 with a written text of alignment that also included the Rumeli *kapetanioi*,[73] which resulted in placing the Ottoman Army under Khurshid in a difficult position as long as the alliance lasted, which was for almost four months, until a little before the end of 1821.[74]

The alliance in question is known in the bibliography as the 'Greek-Albanian alliance' or 'Greek-Albanian Treaty'. Its text was written in simple Greek and signed on 1 September 1821 at Peta in Arta (southern Epirus). The signatories were eight leaders on each side, eight Muslim Tosks, including Ago Muhurdar Besiari and Tahir Abbas, eight Souliots, including Noti

Botzari (though not Kitso Tzavela) and eight *kapetanioi* from Rumeli, including Giorgos Varnakiotis, Yoyos Bakolas, Andreas Iskos (Georgios Karaiskakis's half-brother), and others. Participants in the alliance were also on the Muslim Tosk side, Ziliftar Poda and on the Greek side *kapetanioi* Dimitris Makris and Stathis Katsikoyianis, as well as Ali Pasha's confidant, Alexis Noutsos.[75]

The written alliance undertook the military support of Ali Pasha (his 'salvation') in 'a common war' on the basis of '*besa*' (honour, sworn oath, pledge word to honour an agreement) a highly regarded traditional Albanian concept (whose violation is unthinkable and which is 'more sacred and inviolate than any written law'),[76] a concept well understood by the Greeks,[77] and they referred to themselves in the text as 'Turks and *Romioi*'.[78]

The alliance had been a blessing for the Greeks fighting in Peloponnese, above all by not permitting the passage of Khurshid's army to the south, thereby contributing to the various Greek victories in the Peloponnese throughout 1921.[79] Ali and the members of the alliance contacted the Albanian mercenaries inside Tripolis when it was under siege to inform them of the alliance.[80] Thus prior to the Tripolis carnage (see Chapter 2), following an initiative by the Rumeli *kapetanioi* Staikos and Karapanos, Kolokotronis allowed 1,500 battle-hardy Albanian warriors under Elmez bey to depart from the city and move to the north to join the alliance.[81] Lesser known is that prior to the conquest of Tripolis, a number of Muslim Albanians had abandoned defending the city and had joined the Greek ranks.[82]

Reverting to the Greek-Albanian alliance, Khurshid Pasha sent Omer Vrioni Pasha to Arta in an attempt to dissolve the alliance; Omer Vrioni told the Albanians that 'Ali was as good as lost and that the Greeks were not fighting for Ali, but on their own account'.[83] To check this information the Albanians sent agents to the Greek regions and they discovered that 'mosques had been burned' and moreover that 'the Greeks lacked arms and munitions'.[84]

Meanwhile when Alexander Mavrocordatos, one of the leading Greek political figures (mainly in charge of foreign policy) got wind of the alliance he arrived in Messolonghi, keen to consolidate the cooperation between the two parties irrespective of the fate of Ali. Ago Muhurdar and Tahir Abbas met him in Messolonghi but this was to be the death knell of the alliance, for the Albanian leaders confirmed what had previously been discovered by the Albanian agents. They witnessed to their horror, with their very own eyes, mosques 'razed to the ground and befouled' and Muslim girls 'forcibly baptized', while on the outskirts of the town, 'corpses of mutilated Muslims still lay under the olive trees'.[85] They left in a state of shock and informed their comrades accordingly back home.[86]

The outcome was that the immediate break first with the Souliots. They addressed them as follows[87]:

> Souliots! Until today we were servants of Ali Pasha and your allies … thinking that we were fighting together to free him. But we were deceived

> because now we see clearly that both you and your co-religionists fight for your faith and your freedom. Your war for faith and freedom is clearly a war against our faith and ruler.

The Souliots were embarrassed and had little choice but to depart from Epirus, mainly upon Perraivos's urging.[88] The Muslims Tosk for their part abided by the code of honour (*besa*) and allowed the Souliots to leave even though they were joining the other side which they felt had 'deceived them'.[89]

The Muslim Albanians decided to join the Ottomans and approached Khurshid, 'asking for his pardon and pledging to help him kill Ali and drive out the Greeks'.[90] And for the next years, they fought with the Ottomans 'against the Greeks although, true to their traditions, throughout that time they kept open their communications with the other side' to the frustration of the Ottomans.[91]

Mavrocordatos for his part was well aware that the alliance was ephemeral and could not last for long for two obvious reasons: the differing agendas of the two sides in the alliance that were unbridgeable and the fact that it was bound to seriously damage the Greek image of Christians fighting against Muslim forces, given also Ali's reputation as a tyrant.[92]

With the collapse of the alliance and the main *aghas* (notables) having abandoned Ali and with Khurshid in the saddle, the fate of Ali Pasha was sealed, with only how and when that was to come in doubt. But 'what if', what could have happened had Ali survived and won the war? As put by Tom Winnifrith,[93]

> [h]ad Fate dealt its cards a little differently the first real independent state in the Balkans would not have been the tiny Greek principality of 1832 with its capital in Athens, but a much larger Greek-Albanian state with its capital in Ioannina.

This prospect is accepted by some Greek scholars today (obviously non-nationalists), such as Kostis Papagiorgis and Panagiotis Stathis. Even Panyiotis Aravantinos in the nationalist Greek mindset of the second part of the nineteenth century, did not reject this possibility, with the Austro-Hungarian model in mind, although he doubted that Ali was capable of such an innovative move.[94]

Phase III, 1822–1824

On 24 January 1822, Ali was treacherously assassinated,[95] even though he had surrendered, an act in contravention of the surrender terms,[96] and his head (and those of his sons) were send to the Sultan, though it said that Khurshid (and old acquaintance of Ali), who had given the order to dupe Ali, wept when he saw the severed head.[97] Yet even after the formal abrogation of the Greek-Albanian alliance a number of events point to an ambiguous

relationship between Albanian Muslim on the one hand and Greeks, Christian Tosks and Souliots.

Julius Millingen, a British surgeon who had served under Byron in Messolonghi in 1824 was astonished with 'the close ties that existed' between the Greek fighters and 'the Albanian beys'.[98] As he put it they were 'enemies only in appearance' and there existed between them[99]

> [a] tacit agreement … not to oppose one another's depredations; and in several instances they even protected their respective properties and gave proof of their attachment that made them forgetful of the duties they owed both to their nation and their religion.

Millingen refers, among others, to the close friendship that existed between the Muslim Albanian Governor of Preveza and the Greek *kapetanios* Tsongas[100]:

> Whenever the Albanian wished to preserve his flocks from the rapacity of the [Ottoman] troops encamped in the neighbourhood of Prevesa, he sent them to his friend, who never failed to receive and punctually to return them; and when the slightest apprehension of an invasion of Acarnania prevailed, Zonga [Tsongas] placed, in the same manner, all his cattle in safety, by sending them to Vonitza, where they continued to graze undisturbed till the danger was over.

As Mazower points out, this 'was not a unique case', and while[101]

> the conflict to the south in the Peloponnese turned into a kind of existential struggle, the ties between Muslim and Greek chieftains across much of Rumeli remained strong. The bonds among men who had known one another for years and even decades counted for as much as confessional boundaries or national claims.

None other than Kolokotronis saw it fit to send a letter to the Albanian beys fighting on the Ottoman side. The letter was discovered by the Ottomans who translated it into Turkish and having read it could not believe their eyes. Kolokotronis wrote to the beys that it was their fault they had let 'our old grandfather' (Ali Pasha) be killed and that if they had been 'manly' enough they should not have done this, but they were deceived and tricked. But now was the time to repent and for his part he 'still regarded them as his own and would not deign to kill them even when they came against him under arms. He liked them and saw them as brothers and sons and asked them to send messengers to him' and he was 'ready to grant them his besa on his life, honour and children's lives that he would not harm them', concluding that 'God was on his side and he took the trouble of writing to them as he did not want their ruin'.[102]

In the same year, in 1822, Dramali Pasha (himself an ethnic Albanian) marched with an army of 30,000 men to the south, the largest force sent until then. After having taken Thebes the Albanian *aghas* in his army and their men abandoned him outside Argos, and a little later he was ambushed and met his defeat by the Greek forces headed by Kolokotronis near Argos, at the battle of Dervenaki (26 July 1822).[103]

Indeed the Albanians followed 'a peculiar policy throughout the revolution'.[104] According to H. Şükrü Ilıcak[105]:

> A strong party of Tosk Albanian warlords, composed of the former loyal supporters of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, had formed a close alliance with Greek insurgents following the suppression of the Tepedelenli revolt. Omer Vrioni found himself as the ostensible yet incapacitated leader of this "Tosk league," as Meyer the British Council General in Janina called it,[106] which had a special interest in keeping the Greek uprising alive. The Albanian policy was that of an armed neutrality, secretly counteracting the Turks when they were likely to gain the ascendant, and checking the Greeks when they were inclined to encroach upon Albanian interests … Albanian mercenaries were often tardy in taking the field and obeying orders; even when they followed through, they were reluctant to fight against the Greeks.

Omer Vryoni, who had been a close associate of Ali and had been his main general, was at the centre of this network of relationships.[107] Omer was well acquainted with the leading Greek chieftains of western Rumeli, many of whom had been his friends, all of them like him in Ali Pasha's service, and he kept contacts with several of them. For instance, he wrote to Yiannis Rangos, who had served under him, 'an affectionate letter praising him for his bravery and even claiming the credit'.[108] As he put it: 'My dear Yiannaki, I learned that you've become a kapetan and a brave warrior and it is certainly true that whoever eats my bread becomes a fighter.'[109] Omer's letter offered him leniency if he surrendered, but reminded him who controlled the region. 'Yiannaki,' he wrote, 'Know that first God, and then the Porte and my coreligionists gave me these mountains, and that these days these mountains are mine, and such is God's will'.[110]

Omer's relationship was equally close with one of the main figure among the *kapetanioi* of western Rumeli, Giorgos Varnakiotis. He began his letter to him as follows: 'My most beloved kapetan Georgaki' and made the point that 'Know that as I was before for you, so I still am.' And here we arrive at an interesting little-known aspect of the Greek Revolution in Rumeli, though not in Peloponnese or elsewhere, the so-called *kapakia*, switching allegiances, either momentarily or more permanently, be it out of prudence, so as to survive and fight another day or more permanently, which was not necessarily seen as betrayal for it had a long tradition prior to the Greek Revolution.[111]

All the main *kepatanioi* of Rumeli, almost with no exception had made at least one *kapaki*, including two of the most celebrated military leaders north of Peloponnese, Karaïskakis and Androutsos, both former fighters of Ali Pasha. Betrayal or temporary switch, whatever it may have been in any particular instance, it was made easier and smoother given the Ali Pasha background, with Muslim Albanians, Greeks and Christian Tosks previously 'brothers in arms', a relationship that lasted throughout the revolution. The longstanding friendship of Varnakiotis and Androutsos with Omer Vrioni are the best known such cases, and in Peloponnese which did not experience *kapakia* there was 'the blood brotherhood of Kolokotronis with Ali Farmaki of Lala' since 1809,[112] a relationship that facilitated the surrender of a number of Ottoman fortresses to Kolokotronis with no bloodshed.[113]

The Ottoman documents of that period abound with scathing remarks against the Albanians. The Ottoman administrators went as far as to regard the Muslim Albanians, both the Tosks and the Ghegs 'as the chief impediment to the suppression of the Greek insurrection'.[114]

In the extended correspondence from Ottoman military commanders, including the top Generals, Khurshid and Reshid, Omer emerges as the leading 'villain', letting them down and indirectly supporting the Greek rebels.[115] Khurshid repeatedly accuses Omer (who in 1822 had been rewarded with the Pashalik of Janina, much to Khurshid's anger) for dragging his feet and not going ahead with the siege and surrender of Messolonghi (Omer's excuse was that he was negotiating a surrender, while in fact, according to Khurshid his aim was to save the rebels).[116] Moreover the fact that the Albanians had not come up with a united front against the *Rum*, made Mahmud and the viziers accuse them 'of being devoid of religious zeal and faith', but the Porte was in no state to enforce discipline on the Albanian soldiery for fear of provoking an Albanian uprising, which had become 'a real possibility in 1824'.[117] The Porte had no alternative to deploying the Albanian beys and their forces, for the famous Janissaries could not be trusted to give a helping hand.[118]

In August 1823, another top-ranking Ottoman, General Yusuf Pasha wrote to the Porte accusing Omer of threatening the Albanians so as to prevent them from joining his army. He also wrote that Omer had been able to form a new army of 12,000 Albanian mercenaries, paid with handsome salaries, but when the moment arrived for the army to cross into the Morea and fight, he 'corrupted' them and did not allow them to cross to the south, thereby creating 'a great scandal and much evil'.[119]

The Ghegs were hardly more enthusiastic than the Tosks in the attempt to quell the Greek uprising, though being far to the north their involvement in the events was limited. The formidable hereditary Pasha of Shkoder, Mustafa Bushati (Bushatli in Turkish), patriarch of the leading dynasty of the Gheg Albanians and former rival of Ali Pasha, was instructed by the Porte in 1823 to march south and take Messolonghi. He dully arrived but 'the expedition ended in abject failure' with the siege not lasting for very long and lifted on the

pretext of winter (December 1823).[120] The Sultan was furious and in a state of desperation. According to British Ambassador Strangford, Mahmud,[121]

> possibly for the third time in his fifteen-year reign, went around in person from one office to another at the Sublime Porte without any prior notice, "urging, threatening and even imploring his ministers to make some decisive effort to terminate the Greek rebellion".

The overall insubordination of the Albanians had not passed unnoticed by the Greek revolutionary political leadership, which regarded it as a general dismay of the Albanians with the Porte. Thus in 1822, the Executive of the Revolutionary Government instructed the Souliots who had recently joined the Greek cause, to arrive at various advantageous arrangements with the Albanians, Christians and Muslims alike, with a view to a future union in an independent Greece.[122]

Phase IV, 1825–1830

The contacts and tacit or explicit dealings between the two sides hardly ended with the advent of Ibrahim and his coordinated attacks together with General Mehmed Reshid Pasha (known as Kioutahi) and continued until the very end when Ibrahim was out of the picture and Reshid in charge as *Seraskier* (field marshal of the Ottoman Army) as well as Grand Vizier.

One of the most striking examples was in 1826 when the Muslim Tosks participated among the valiant defenders of Messolonghi, together with their Christian ethnic kin, the Souliots and the Greeks, and fought with them until the bitter end when the city fell mainly due to hunger.[123]

We will refer to a number of lesser known episodes of this intriguing relationship. In the autumn 1827, the brother of Ioannis Capodistrias, Viaros Capodistrias had contacts with Ziliftar Poda and Sahin Bey prompting them to take up arms against the Porte in Epirus and they did not seem adverse to the idea. Probably as a result of this contact, upon the initiative of Ziliftar Poda, Albanian chieftains approached Giorgos Tsongas and the Souliot Kostas Botzaris with a view to common military activity.[124]

A little later, in November 1827, the British General Richard Church whom, in 1827, the Greeks had chosen to become overall military commander of the army (another Briton, Lord Cochrane was been chosen to head the navy) met Albanian leaders in the gulf of Astakos (in western Rumeli) urging them to revolt and they seemed forthcoming.[125]

The next year, in April 1828, in Ibrahim's army, 3,000 Albanians in Koroni and 800 Albanians in Noekastro (Pylos) rebelled wanting to abandon Ibrahim and, with Kolokotronis's assistance, were able to safely leave Peloponnese and reach Rumeli. In the same year during the takeover of Livadia (in eastern Rumeli) by Dimitrios Ypsilantis, two Albanian chieftains, Abbas Cam and Kasım Mesguram and their men sought to abandon Reshid's forces,

and the Greeks were keen to oblige allowing them to reach Peloponnese safely. This act had taken place as a result of the involvement of Varnakiotis, the close friend of Omer Vrioni.[126] A little later, Abbas Cam and Kasım Mesguram, together with an accomplice named Vasil Baba, who was the sealbearer of Omer Vrioni, 'corrupted the other Albanian chiefs to join them'.[127]

There were many other examples of mutual trust, with the Muslim Albanians on several occasions assisting the Greek forces. This was mostly done freely and not as a result of duress. As for the Greeks and Christian Tosks surrendering to Albanian-led forces was regarded a far better option than doing so to Ottoman Turks. And there were many instances of common initiatives and even some joint attacks against the 'Turks'. There were occasions where Muslim Tosks surrendered without firing a shot (or simply by shooting in the air), leaving to the Greeks their arms, ammunition, supplies and food. And in instances of a betrayal on the part of the Greeks following, say, an arranged surrender, which may have led to their persecution, it was perceived with puzzlement and sorrow for what was seen as betrayed friendship.[128]

There were also a number of Albanian Muslims, perhaps up to a hundred, who fought in the Greek ranks with distinction. In 1828 there was a small army unit, the so-called Ottoman *ekatondarchia* (Ottoman century) of about 30 Muslim Albanians under Mustafa Gega. When Greece became independent, most of them chose to remain in Greece and they petitioned for compensation for their efforts, justifying fighting with the Greeks as motivated by their attachment to the value of freedom that did not exist in the Ottoman Empire.[129]

The last battle of the Greek Revolution took place in Petra, on 12 September 1829, with the Greek forces victorious under Dimitrios Ypsilantis. Following the Petra battle, Aslan Bey Puzzi (the son of Ali Pasha's sealkeeper Mehmed Bey Karamurat) and his coleader Osman Agha, were quick to arrive at a deal with Ypsilantis. He allowed them and their men safe passage to the north in exchange for assuming fortified positions which would secure Greek control up to the Spercheios River, thereby enhancing the Greek claims to the whole of Rumeli up to the Amvrakikos-Pagasitikos line.[130]

However, the issue of the borderline was not immediately resolved, but frustratingly changed three times within two years: the Amvrakikos-Pagasitikos gulfs, then to the south the rivers Spercheios and Acheloos, then again the Amvrakikos-Pagasitikos gulfs.[131] This created anguish not only to those officially in charge, Capodistrias and Reshid Pasha but also to those more directly involved in these regions, namely the Greek, Vlach and Christian Tosks on the Greek side who, in order to survive with their families and men indulged in various *kapakia*. As for the Albanian missionaries or former missionaries in the Ottoman Army, they went as far as to take up arms against the Ottomans, when Reshid was away fighting the Russians in Bulgaria (in the 1828–1829 Russo-Ottoman War). The Albanians were led by Ziliftar Poda, Ismail Bey Vlora, Sahin Bey and Veli Bey Yatzi, with Aslan Bey Puzzi and his brothers Ragib and Kaplan, the main military figures.

According to Basil Gounaris[132]:

> Poda was steadily encouraging a rapprochement with the Roumeliot chieftains, his old acquaintances from the court of Ali; Sahin and Ismail were in contact with Kapodistrias's elder brother, Viaros, in an attempt to rekindle AlbanianGreek relations and possibly to coordinate military operations. However, they were not looking for a formal and binding alliance with the rebels or desired to live under Christian rule, as Mehmed Reşid suspected. In a letter addressed to other beys, Ismail Vliora stated that the Albanians would deal with the Greeks once they had protected their fatherland (vatan) and put their own miserable house in order. This should not be interpreted as a call for Albanian national independence. What they really wanted was to have a word in Ottoman politics and to retain their military hegemony.

The Albanian leaders hoped that Mustafa Pasha of Shkoder would join them but he refrained from doing so and they regarded his stance treasonous. Thus in 1829 the Albanian beys called upon the Christians Albanian-speaking and Greek-speaking men of Himara for help, they also called upon the Souliots that had migrated to Rumeli, the chieftains of Rumeli (in this they had some success, especially in the case of younger fighters) and even wrote to Capodistrias seeking his support. Capodistrias answered politely that he could not come to their assistance for peace with the Ottoman Empire had been restored and any breach on his part would damage Greek interests.[133]

Reshid lured the Albanians 'with pardons and bribes' and on 9 August 1830 summoned them to Bitola. In fact it was a treacherous well-planned trap, given Reshid's furry with what had transpired which he regard as an act of treason by fellow-Muslims. When they arrived hundreds of them were shot (the Albanians claim that the dead were 500 but they were probably less, some 120 according to the British consul in Janina),[134] including Aslan Bey Puzzi and Veli Bey Yatzi,[135] with their severed heads 'duly salted and sent to Constantinople for exhibition'.[136] The shrewd Ziliftar Poda and Aslan's brother Ragib prudently avoided attending the Bitola meeting and were thus saved.[137]

Why limited antagonism and intricate collaboration?

Before embarking on what is basically speculation and the search for, by necessity, tentative rather than definite answers, let us present the two sides in this curious tug-of-war, the Ottomans and the Albanians in their service.

Starting with the Ottomans, their repeated accusations against the Albanians can be placed under four headings. One is unreliability, with the sole interest of the Albanian fighters being profit. The second accusation is that they in effect left the Greeks scot free. A third accusation related to the previous one is that this amounted to treason. And a fourth accusation is that they had their own agenda, imitating the Greeks they sought independence from Ottoman rule.

According to Hakan Erdem[138]:

> Contemporary Ottoman documentation is full of invective against the "Albanians". Numerous Ottomans from mere scribes to the Sultan himself heaped abuse on Albanians in an unrestrained way. Criticism against an individual Albanian, say a chief, easily deteriorates into abusive stereotypes against the whole group … The Albanians are strongly criticised for their attitude vis-à-vis the Greek Rebellion or for that matter for their responses to the policies of Istanbul. One of the stock accusations was that the Albanians would not fight any of the Sultan's campaigns even in a declared holy war (*cihad*) unless they were paid in cash and that in advance.

More specifically, according to Ottoman officials the Albanian chiefs never produced the agreed number of soldiers and in the rare occasions that they did so, they then 'allowed them to disappear at various stages of the campaign', yet they continued to claim the salaries and rations even though they were not doing their assigned job properly, demanding in advance two months salaries or pocketing them and doing nothing.[139] And as one Ottoman report concluded the 'Tosk Albanian millet were a conspiratorial lot. Money was their religion and faith'.[140]

Moving on to the second accusation, the Ottomans were well aware of Ypsilantis's and Kolokotronis's appeals to the Albanians as well as various Albanian actions that had left the Greeks off the hook, such as those by Omer Vrioni. Understandably the relationship between several Albanian chiefs and the leaders of the Greeks had been a far greater concern to the Porte than the controversy over salaries.[141] Thus the Ottomans reached the conclusion, as put in January 1823 by the new Governor General of Rumelia, Mehmed Emin Pasha: 'that if the Albanians put their hearts into it, the war with the Greeks could be won in a short time, as the Albanians knew all the tricks of the Greeks and the Greeks dreaded them'.[142] But, alas, this was not the case, for[143]

> [t]hey did not put their hearts into it. The Tosks, as the "zealous partisans" of the executed Ali Pasha of Tepedelen, felt disconcerted. They were dragging their feet with a lot of excuses or simply deserting. Their hearts had to be won over.

But this charge if taken seriously brought to the fore a more severe accusation, high treason.[144] The Albanians were accused of having been in contact with the enemy and of acquiescing to various Greek requests and that they were manipulating the '*Rum* revolt' for their own ends.[145]

Reshid wrote to the Porte that they were 'a money-loving people, they could perpetrate [the offence of] serving another millet for money', implying serving 'another "nation", not necessarily, but most probably, the Greeks, if they found employment with them or were offered more money'.[146] And he added[147]:

> These people fool themselves that if this region, as well as other places, comes under the rule of the infidels they will be given liberty (serbesti) by them and will be allowed to possess their property and live in peace at their homes together with their families. They openly accept and express this foolish dream.

Reshid went even further (to the fourth accusation), claiming that 'the Albanians were after self-rule or even independence', having witnessed the upcoming independence of Greece. According to Erdem, 'Reshid Mehmed Pasha, and most probably Sultan Mahmud as well, actually believed that some Albanian leaders were on the verge of a large conspiracy of a "nationalist"' character not unlike that of the Greeks'.[148]

This explains how Reshid dealt with the important Albanian leader, Ismail Bey Vlora. He regarded his case as characteristic of this trend for 'self-rule' among the Albanians. Let us see what transpired. Ismail Bey had asked to be appointed to the governorship of his native Vlora as a precondition for taking up service with Reshid. Seraskier Reshid was convinced that the aim of Ismail and of his friend Ziliftar Poda was to get rid of him and control the whole of Albania. Thus when the Albanian troops in Janina began to riot for their payment, Reshid invited Ismail to his *konak* (house) in January 1829 for talks, in the meantime having organised an ambush. As Ismail dismounted his horse and started to climb the stairs he was killed by a hail of bullets. Sultan Mahmud congratulated Reshid for his deed and immediately made him Grand Vizier (28 January 1829).[149]

As regards the Albanians it seems that the Ottoman accusations regarding their attitude as unreliable mercenaries motivated only by money is not wide off the mark, although we don't have first-hand sources to confirm it. Apart from the Ottoman view, this was also the perception of foreign eyewitnesses. According to Finlay '[t]eir avarice was, however, insatiable, and for gold an Albanian Mussulman would willingly serve a Christian master, or a Christian Albanian a Mussulman chief, even if the service was to be rendered in deed of blood'.[150]

This also happened to be the contemporary view of the Greeks, who were convinced that they could lure the Muslim Albanians to their side and that the only reason that this could not be achieved was the Greek lack of 'golden salaries' to buy them off.[151] The Greeks also believed that hatred prevailed between the Muslim Albanians and the 'Turks' and this explained the many uncooperative acts.[152] Finlay was convinced that the 'relations of Mussulman and Christian Albanians were much more friendly than the relations of Albanians and Turks'.[153]

Among the most obvious explanations for the flexible attitude of the Muslim Albanians towards the Greeks and Christian Tosks, as well as for the ease with which the *kapakia* functioned, was the Ali Pasha background, having been in his service and having been intimate for years if not decades, in many

cases having established mutual confidence and one that lasted well into the hurricane that was to follow.

Another obvious explanation as far as the Albanian Tosk are concerned is of course ethnicity: that the Muslim Tosks and the Orthodox Christian Tosks, the Souliots and all the others that had sided with the Greek cause were both ethnic Albanians, speaking a common to both Tosk dialect. Here a vignette is in order. Ahmed Neprevista, an Albanian Ottoman officer in charge of a passage in the Kravara Mountains of western Rumeli, when Kitsos Tzavelas told him to surrender and give up his position, he reported: 'Kitzo (*sic*) I knew you as an Arvanite like myself, how on earth did you learn this Greek which I do not know'.[154]

A lesser known explanation rarely referred to, is the extent of blood brotherhood between Muslims and Orthodox Christians, a striking custom that started in the late eighteenth century and continued well into the interwar years (and was present in southern Albanian and Greek Epirus even as late as 1940–1945). A blood-brother (*vllam* in Albanian, *vlamis* in its Greek rendition) was a solemnly approved brotherhood between a Muslim and an Orthodox Christian male (Arvanite or Greek) usually blessed by a Christian or Muslim religious figure, present during the ceremony, and it covered all Muslim and Christian social strata.[155]

Another explanation for the flexible attitude of the Muslim Tosks towards the Greeks and Christian Tosks and Souliots was their lack of religious fanaticism. This was the contemporary view of Leake, Hobhouse and Finlay, and later in the eighteenth century of Albanologists, such as von Hahn and Malte-Brun (for the latter two, see Chapter 5).[156]

Before the Greek Revolution Hobhouse had noted that they were not in the position to say which religion they preferred, they went to the mosque on Friday and to a church on Sunday and that they preferred to define themselves as Albanians rather than as Muslims or Christians.[157] According to Finlay, 'their religion was hardly a matter of consciousness with the majority'.[158] And he noticed that 'the Albanians, unlike the Greeks, felt the bonds of nationality stronger than their religion'.[159] Hence, they did not take seriously the calls for a *cihad*. This lack of Muslim fervour was also the contemporary view of the Greeks as well as of the Orthodox Christian Tosks fighting with the Greeks.

This religious moderation was also probably due to Bektashism, the pantheistic heretical sect within Islam which was prevalent particularly among the Muslim Tosks and is strikingly tolerant towards non-Muslims. Ali Pasha was probably a Bektashi and what is certain is that during his reign the Bektashis flourished, with many lodges of the Sufi order (*tekke*) springing up (Ali may have done this to get at the Sultan whose centralism was opposed by the Janissaries most of whom were Bektashis).[160] This was very contrary to what occurred afterwards upon his demise, when Mahmud persecuted the Bektashi lodges, especially from 1826 onward, following the crushing of the

Janissaries on 15 June 1826 in the so-called 'Auspicious Incident'. However, there is no archival evidence pointing to Bektashism as a factor for Muslim Albanian non-compliance with the Ottoman order.[161] But one can speculate that Mahmud's enmity towards the Bektashis and the destruction of their lodges, could hardly have endeared him to the Albanians, making those Muslim Tosks who were Bektashis willing to follow Mahmud's and Reshid's orders to crush the Greeks.

In view of the 1829–1831 uprising of the Albanians and the conclusion of Reshid and probably Mahmud that the Albanians were imitating the Greek example, there is some – though by no means conclusive – evidence of nascent nationalism,[162] as seen in some letters and other documents of the Muslim Tosk and Gheg leaders at the time, but to speak in terms of a fully fledged national project is probably going too far.[163] There was of course the example of Ali's attempt at independence, although not in the name of Albania. Moreover there was the upcoming Greek independence which was as clear as day well before 1830, in 1828–1829, a feat achieved by the Greeks and their brethren, the Orthodox Christians Tosks, as *palikaria* (valiant fighters) as they also regarded themselves, against a huge and formidable foe. Clearly it appeared as a fine example worth emulating and dampening any remaining feeling of antagonism towards them.

We will conclude with a vignette provided by David Urquhart, a Scottish philhellene who fought in the Greek Revolution and had been seriously injured. In 1830, he headed a mission under Ambassador Stratford Canning aimed at settling the exact border between Greece and the Ottoman Empire. While travelling in the Pindos Mountains with Veli Bey Yatzi (before he was shot dead in Bitola), the bey after referring to the deeds of Ali Pasha, spoke enthusiastically about his vision of an independent Albania, and 'above all, the necessity of establishing friendly relations of his own people and Europe, through which foreign capital would pour in' and 'increase the wealth of the country'.[164] He 'spoke in the midst of his men, of the plan that had been formed for organising Albania, as if to sound their feelings'.[165] His men turned to Urquhart and said, 'Tell our Bey to leave us our fustanels [their traditional skirts], and we will become any thing [*sic*] he pleases'.[166]

Notes

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3 John S. Koliopoulos and Thanos M. Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel. From 1831 to the Present* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002), 251.
4 Romilly Jenkins, 'Byzantium and Byzantinism', *Classical Studies*, 1 (1967), 171.
5 Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), 29.
6 *Ibid.*, 28–9.

7 Stavro Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1980), 161.
8 *Ibid*., 161, 193–4.
9 Dimitris Livanios, 'The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453–1913', in Katerina Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 245–6. More generally on the pre-modern mainly religious form of identity in the Balkans see L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Co, 2000) [1958], 103–7, 519.
10 Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 501.
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12 *Ibid*., 185.
13 Lambros Baltsiotis and Léonidas Embirikos, 'De la formation d'un ethnonym. Le terme Arvinitis et son évolution à l'État Hellénique', in *Byzantina et Moderna: Mélanges en l'honneur de Héllène Antoniadis-Bibikou* (Athens : Alexandria, 2007), 418.
14 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 29.
15 Thanos M. Veremis, 'Eisagogi' [Introduction], in Thanos M. Veremis (ed.), *1821: Tripolitsa, Messolonghi* (Athens: Metaixmio, 2019), 16.
16 Kostis Papagiorgis, *Ta kapakia: Varnakiotis, Karaiskakis, Androutsos* [The kapakia: Varnakiotis, Karaiskakis, Androutsos] (Athens: Ekdoseis Kastanioti, 2003), 79.
17 William Martin Leake, *Researches in Greece* (London: John Booth, 1814), 254–5; Thomas Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1844, 2nd edition) [1832], vol. I, 34 footnote *; George Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861), vol. I, 34–5.
18 The first study on the Souliots was by Perraivos and the best monograph to date is by Vaso Psimouli, *Souli kai Souliotes* [Souli and the Souliotes] (Athens: Vivliopolion tis Estias, 2019) [1998], but she does not cover the years of the Greek Revolution.
19 The addition of the 's' at the end of their names (Botzaris, Tzavelas), common to most Greek names, appeared when they moved south and joined the Greek ranks.
20 Yianis Yianoulopoulos, *Oi ellinikes edafikes diekdikiseis sto Sinedrio Irinis ton Parision (1946) kai i proistoria tous* [The Greek Territorial Claims in the Paris Peace Conference (1946) and Their Prehistory] (forthcoming), 14, footnote 4; Theodoros Pangalos, 'Katastasi kai prooptikes ton ellinoalbanikon scheseon' [The State and Prospectives of Greek-Albanian Relations], in Marietta Yiannakou et al. (eds), *Elllada kai Alvania* [Greece and Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 2017), 112.
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Otherwise the Albanian Historiography and Muhammad Ali], in Andreas Lyberatos (ed.), *Valkanikes anagnoseis tou 1821* [Balkan readings of 1821] (Athens: Melissa, 2021), 202, 205.
24 *Ibid*., 211.
25 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 24.
26 *Ibid*., 24.
27 *Ibid*., 43.
28 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 72.
29 Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*, 159.
30 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 71–2; K.E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 60–5.
31 See previous note.
32 Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, 60, 63–4; Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 43.
33 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 43.
34 Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, 64–5.
35 *Ibid*., 66.
36 Dennis N. Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha's Last Gamble', in Nikiforos P. Diamandouros et al. (eds), *Hellenism and the First Greek War of Liberation (1821–1830): Continuity and Change* (Thessaloniki: Institute of Balkan Studies, 1976), 102; Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 72.
37 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 71.
38 *Ibid*., 71–2.
39 *Ibid*., 70.
40 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 43.
41 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 99; Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 72–3.
42 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 34.
43 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 101–2.
44 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 70.
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47 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 71. See also Gregori L. Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona: ta ditikovalkanika pasalikia tis Othomanikis Aftokratorias* [Albania and Epirus at the End of the 18th Century: The Western Balkan Pashaliks of the Ottoman Empire] (translation from the Russian by Antonia Dialla) (Athens: Gutenberg, 1994), 328–9; Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 100.
48 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 101. See also Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, 157.
49 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 102.
50 *Ibid*., 102; Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona*, 330, 333–4.
51 Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, 118–9; Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 34.
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53 *Ibid*., 119.
54 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 102.
55 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 33–4.
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58 Zavalani, *History of Albania*, 117.
59 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 104.
60 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 75.

61 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 99–100; Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 35.
62 Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona*, 339.
63 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 106–7, 109; Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona*, 339.
64 Skiotis, 'The Greek Revolution', 109.
65 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 76; Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona*, 339.
66 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 77.
67 *Ibid*., 77.
68 Quoted in *ibid*., 77.
69 *Ibid*., 77.
70 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 42.
71 Basil C. Gounaris, 'Blood Brothers in Despair: Greek Brigands, Albanian Rebels and the Greek-Ottoman Frontier, 1829–1831', *Cahiers balkaniques*, 45 (2018), 2.
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78 Fanourakis, 'I "ellinoalvaniki symahia" tou 1821', 131–3, 135.
79 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 151.
80 Fanourakis, 'I "ellinoalvaniki symahia" tou 1821', 141–2 and footnote 26.
81 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 266–8; William Martin Leake, *An Historical Outline of the Greek Revolution* (London: John Murray, 1826), 54–5; Gounaris, 'Blood Brothers in Despair', 3.
82 Gounaris, *Den einai o persinos kairos…* 70.
83 Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923*, 42.
84 *Ibid*., 42.
85 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 150. See also Arsh, *I Alvania kai i Epiros sta teli tou 18ou aiona*, 342.
86 Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. I, 113–4; Papagiorgis, *Ta kapakia*, 85–6.
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102 Hakan Erdem, '"Perfidious Albanians" and "Zealous Governors": Ottomans, Albanians, and Turks in the Greek War of Independence', in Antonis Anastasopoulos and Elias Kolovos (eds), *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760–1850*, 224.
103 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 238.
104 H. Şükrü Ilıcak, 'Ottoman Context', in Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Constantinos Tsoukalas (eds), *The Greek Revolution: A Critical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), 70.
105 *Ibid*., 70.
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113 Dimitrios Papastamatiou, 'Military Leaders', in Kitromilides and Tsoukalas (eds), *The Greek Revolution*, 415–6.
114 Ilıcak, 'Ottoman Context', 71.
115 Erdem, '"Perfidious Albanians" and "Zealous Governors"', 218.
116 *Ibid*., 218; Gounaris, 'Blood Brothers in Despair', 3–4.
117 Ilıcak, 'Ottoman Context', 71.
118 Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 238.
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4 Greek nationalism

National identity and historical narrative

From *genos* to nation (1453–1800)

The Greek term *genos* which does not have its equivalent in other European languages was used since the days of the Byzantine Empire to denote the Orthodox Christian community and its members (as '*genos ton Christianon*' or '*genos ton Romaion*).[1] *Genos* was associated with Greek, the official language of the Byzantine state since the seventh century and the main language of the *Rum millet* under Ottoman rule (in the latter case *millet* was translated into Greek as *genos*). However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, it began to be used interchangeably with the concept of nation (i.e. Greek nation, Greek *genos*).[2]

The Greek speakers and Hellenised Greek Orthodox called themselves *Romioi*, that is Romans in demotic Greek, and the laymen whose mother tongue was Greek called their language *Romaika*, that is Roman, although the educated realised that the language was Greek. The identity and corresponding collective narrative of the Greek speakers and those eventually Hellenised (namely, many Orthodox Christian Albanian speakers, Vlach speakers as well as Slav speakers), can be seen as having evolved along four phases.

The first phase is the one of *genos*, in its original meaning, that is being Greek Orthodox (Greek in the clerical sense not nationally) from 1453 onwards within a millenarian setting. From 1453 until the end of the seventeenth century, the dominant view was that the Orthodox Christian Romans had been vanquished due to their 'sins' and it was 'God's will' to be placed under the wing of the Muslim Ottomans who protected them from the 'heretic Catholics'.[3] The defeated Orthodox Christians were to regain after eons their previous glory, the Eastern Roman Empire, and but this was to take place as a result of God's intervention, given increasing suffering at the hands of the 'infidel Ottomans'. Deliverance through providential intervention could come about from a 'blond-headed race', implying the Russians.[4]

The second phase, which could be called pre-national, put aside the various naive oracles and prophesies; the dominant view was the sense of being *Romaios* or *Romios*, their heritage and attachment was to the Eastern Roman Empire.[5] As for their sense of identity, characteristic was the view of

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the distinguished eighteenth-century monk, Cosmas Aetolos: 'You are not Hellenes, you are not disrespectful, heretics, atheists, but you are respectful Orthodox Christians'.[6]

The third phase is the one of the early Neo-Hellenic or Greek Enlightenment in the second part of the eighteenth century. During these four decades the concept of *genos* was filtered with a first sense of an identity of a different order.[7] The main representatives of this trend were the cleric and teacher Evgenios Voulgaris and the teacher and judge Dimitrios Katartzis, who envisaged the creation of an enlightened Roman Christian monarchy.[8] Katartzis is the first to have used the word *ethnos* (nation) in the place of *genos*, putting emphasis on language as the main criterion of nationhood and he toyed with two heritages, the Byzantine one as well as the ancient Greek heritage.[9]

The fourth phase in search for identity and ideology is the 'Hellenization of the Romioi',[10] with the determining contribution of Adamantios Korais, who was to present one of the two main Greek national narratives of the nineteenth century, with enlightened monarchy, giving its place to the quest for a democratic Greek state, along the principles of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.[11]

National identity and national narrative (1800–1860)

According to Korais, who had experienced first-hand the French Revolution, the Greeks were direct descendants of the ancient Greeks. The emergence of modern Greece in 1821 was an instance of 'revival' or 'resurrection' (*palingenesia*).[12] Greece was reborn like the mythical phoenix from its ashes. From the late fourth century B.C. until 1821 the Greeks, who had not petered out, were a subject people, in chronological order, under the Macedonians, the Romans, the Byzantines and finally the 'Turks'.[13]

Korais 'had worked hard to popularize the terms "Hellene" and "Greek" among the literate classes, to wean Greeks off the Church and bring them back to the values of the ancients'.[14] He rejected the terms Roman or *Romios*, for he regarded them associated with religion,[15] and instead opted for the term *Graikos* (Greeks) for the modern Greeks, taken from the Latin word for the ancient Greeks while retaining the term *Hellenes* only for the ancient Greeks.[16] Korais did not call the Byzantines, Romans so as to dissociate them from the ancient Romans, but 'Graeco-Romans' (*Graiko-Romaioi*), and he regarded them reckless and he claimed that this had been the reason for their demise.[17] Moreover, he dismissed the Byzantine Empire as an entity beset by 'priest-ridden obscurantism' with no Byzantine author worth reading.[18] Korais deplored the legacy of Byzantium for another reason as well, as he put it[19]

> many times the [Byzantine] army would raise up to the imperial throne not genuine Romans, but Thracians, Bulgars, Illyrians, Triballi, Armenians, and other such thrice-barbarous despots, whose yoke became the heavier, as one by one the lights of [ancient] Greece went out.

For Korais and his followers, many of them major figures in the new state, the emphasis on the ancient Greeks was aimed at raising the sense of self-worth of the modern Greeks, but it was also intended for Europe, which under neo-classicism and the Enlightenment venerated ancient Greek civilisation. Within the triptych of ancient Greece, Rome and Christianity, as the cradle of European civilisation and indeed of civilisation *tout court*, Greek antiquity was the first and to many, the most exalted heritage.[20] Thus, the modern Greeks acquired a glorious 'passport', without having to undergo the agony of their Balkan neighbours who could not claim such a prestigious pedigree.[21] The Greeks via the European route acquired an 'ideal national identity',[22] which was seen as legitimate and convincing, give the persistence of the Greek language, having lived in the same region for centuries, and not least the array of imposing ancient monuments all over the country. As a result the Greeks appeared to be a 'dream nation' *par excellence*.[23]

Incorporating the Byzantine heritage in the national narrative was not seen as a good idea in view of the 'significant Other', Europe. For the Europeans of the Enlightenment and the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Byzantine Empire was tyrannical, despotic, theocratic and obscurantist. This was the view of major Enlightenment figures, such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Hegel. Montesquieu wondered how a state with such endemic disadvantages, social, religious and others, and so 'corrupt' could have survived for so long. Voltaire was of the view that there is no other history as 'ridiculous' as that of Byzantium, a history which is an affront to the human mind.[24] Hegel talks of 'a disgusting image of stupidity' and 'irrational passions', 'a rotten edifice' finally overcome by the vitality of the 'Turks'.[25] And historian Edward Gibbon, whom Korais greatly admired,[26] was also critical of the Byzantine Empire in his monumental *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781–1789).[27]

As for the Macedonians, Korais and his followers argued that they were a 'barbarian people' that had conquered the Greeks in the battlefield, at the tragic Battle of Chaeronea, in 338 B.C., as well as through bribery (Macedon was known for its gold).[28] In those days, this was also the dominant view of intellectuals in Europe and the Americas, echoing Gibbon.[29]

Among the very few major European figures that held a different view regarding the Macedonians were the German historian August Ludwig von Schlözer and the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt.[30]

Korais's national historical grand narrative falls under the concept of 'national awakening', which Anthony Smith calls 'recurrent perennialism'[31]; that nations disappear and reappear in history, with the help of 'awakeners'. However, the idea of the resurrected phoenix could not instil an emotional attachment and popular national ideology to the Greeks, as it involved a time gap of 1,500 years and even more crucially it overlooked Orthodox Christianity, the very stuff that had unified the Greeks and the Orthodox Albanians, Vlachs and others in the Greek struggle for independence.[32]

This difficulty was filled convincingly, at least for the Greeks, by historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, professor of history at the University of Athens, who remains the father of the Greek national history, which has dominated the scene ever since. His task was to bring about 'a continuity' of Greek national history from the Homeric days until his days, by incorporating the Macedonian-Hellenistic as well as the Byzantine epochs and speaking in terms of the existence of a 'Hellenic nation' from antiquity onwards.[33]

The above almost uninterrupted continuity also resulted in the key synthesis of Greek antiquity with Christianity. This was a task with considerable contribution from another emerging field of research, folklore, by the folklorist and theorist of history Spyridon Zambelios, who was followed by the next generations of folklorists, in the later part of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century.[34]

According to Paparrigopoulos's *magnum opus*, the five-volume *History of the Hellenic Nation*,[35] the national genealogy is the following: Ancient Hellenism, Macedonian Hellenism, Christian Hellenism, Medieval Hellenism and Modern Hellenism. Another basic ingredient of the Greek national narrative is the concept of 'Helleno-Christianity' (*Helleno-Christianismos*), first coined a little earlier by Zambelios, in effect 'a Hellenic-Christian synthesis formula'.[36]

Regarding the inclusion of the Macedonians, those against it, who claimed that they were a foreign people unrelated to the ancient Greeks, included the professor of history and philology, Dimitrios Vernardakis, the legal scholar and parliamentarian Georgios Typaldos Iakovatos and the politician and writer Leon Melas. And surprisingly the school texts in the Greeks school system until the beginning of the twentieth century continued to teach the pupils that the ancient Macedonians had conquered the Greeks.[37]

As regards the incorporation of the Byzantine Empire, those against it included equally eminent figures, such as the thinker and diplomat Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, who has served as minister in several governments and ambassador, constitutional law professor Nikolaos Saripolos, the historian Constantine Sathas, the poet and professor of archaeology Alexander Rizos Ragavis, who had served as foreign minister and ambassador, the law professor and politician Pavlos Kalligas, who had served repeatedly as minister, and the professor of Latin, Stephanos Koumanoudis, who was one of the most ardent critics of what he called the 'Zambelio-Paparrigopoulian school' in its incorporation of 'fanatically religious Byzantium'.[38]

However, fortunately for Paparrigopoulos and Zambelios their task was made easier with the rise of Romanticism in Europe, with its positive approach towards the medieval period, including the Byzantine era.

As regards Macedonia and the Macedonians, this shift was bolstered by the German historian Johann Gustav Droysen, in his 1833 magnum opus, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (Alexander the Great). Droysen claimed that when the Macedonians arrived on the scene, Greek values were in

decline, in view of their obsessive attachment to local autonomy, and the 'racially Greek Macedonians' initiated a 'national' war against Persia, 'a goal that eventually united all Greeks into a free and powerful sovereign state', and as for Alexander he 'advanced a war of unity and the liberation of all Hellenes'.[39]

Droysen's views were music to the ears of Paparrigopoulos, Zambelios and other Greeks, but his stance did not go unchallenged in European scholarship. It was disputed by two eminent scholars, by the German archaeologist and historian Ernest Curtius and by the English classical historian George Grote.[40] According to Curtius, the mass resistance against Philip headed by Demosthenes was the last worthwhile act of Greece and of Greek history.[41] According to Grote, in his seminal 12-volume *History of Greece* (1846–1856), the Athenian and Greek golden period, was regrettably interrupted by Macedonian expansionism; the Macedonians were not Greeks, and Alexander, was a Macedonian and Epirot barbarian prince only 'partially imbued with Grecian sentiment and intelligence'.[42]

Paparrigopoulos was disturbed especially for the stance of Grote, whom he held in high esteem and he felt that a rebuttal was in order. According to Paparrigopoulos, Grote's mistake was that he was so attached to an idealised image of political autonomy and Athenian (Hellenic) democratic rule and individual liberty, that he jumped to the conclusion that the Macedonians (in view of their autocratic rule) were not *Hellenes*.[43] For the national Greek historian, Macedonian rule 'succeeded in purging the Greek nation of the curse of centuries, namely, disunion' and 'Alexander opened the gates of Hellenism to the East, paving the way for dissemination of Christianity' and for the coming of the Byzantine Empire as a Greek empire.[44] He also made the point that the Macedonian case of the unification of the Greeks resembled the case of the Italian unification (*Risorgimento*), with the Macedonia of Philip and Alexander the Great playing the role of Piedmont in Italian unification.[45]

The Macedonian dimension, however, was a storm in a tee-cup by comparison to what had occurred a few years before, in fact three years prior to Droysen's publication, which involved that far trickier problem of the 1,100 year Byzantine history, which called for its urgent incorporation to Greek national history. This urgent need had come about as a result of the publication by a noted Bavarian historian, Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, in 1830, of a two-volume study, titled *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (History of the Morea peninsula during the Middle Ages). In it he claimed that the present day so-called Greeks bore no relationship whatsoever to the ancient Greeks; they were by no means their biological descendants, in view of recurring waves of Slavs that had arrived in the southern Balkans, in present-day Greece from 577 until 615 AD, followed in the fourteenth century by the arrival of a great number of Albanians and also, to a somewhat lesser extent of Aroumanians (Vlachs), which all had resulted in extinguishing the Greeks completely.

For the Greeks, this amounted to a triple blow: repudiating the existence of the Greek nation *qua* Greek in view of its presumed 'racial disappearance' and replacement by people of Slavic and Albanian stock; disputing the Greek Revolution as an uprising of the Greeks; and disputing the legitimacy of the new state as Greek and as one founded by the descendants of the venerated ancient Greeks. Hence, a persuasive rebuttal was in order. And indeed the Greek intelligentsia, with Paparrigopoulos and Zambelios at the forefront provided a comprehensive and convincing scholarly answer, at least by the standards of the nineteenth century historiography.[46]

The Greek historians did not make the mistake of doubting the mass migration of Slavs, Albanians and Vlachs, which is a well-established historical fact. The main thrust was that in the case of the Slavs and to an almost equal degree the Albanians, they had been assimilated by the Greeks and their Byzantine Greek culture. In the Slav case their language disappeared completely south of geographical Macedonia, and what was left were a number of place names of some villages, towns or mountains. As for the Albanians (and Vlachs), most had been linguistically assimilated until the nineteenth century or were bilingual, as seen during the Greek Revolution, and regarded themselves as part of the Greek nation.[47]

In the next decades the scholarship outside Greece, notably by the German historian Karl Hopf and others, concluded that the evidence provided by Fallmerayer, as regards Greek disappearance and not the waves of migrants as such (which had taken place), lack 'solid scholarly basis'.[48] In the twentieth century major Russian historians who made much of the southern Slavic emigration of the sixth and seventh century, such as M.V. Levtchenko, Alexander Vasiliev, George Ostrogorsky and Dimitri Obolensky 'never went so far as to assert that the Greek race was exterminated, though they spoke of an influx of large numbers of Slavs into Southern Greece already in the sixth century'.[49] The main error of Hopf and of the Greek historians in the nineteenth century and until the 1950s was that they tried to limit the years of Slavic presence to a century or even half a century, while in fact they were present south of Mount Olympus for 210 years,[50] an error of course not made by the aforementioned Russian historians.

Clearly, the Paparrigopoulos narrative, apart from enhancing the moral and self-respect of the Greeks in their small and modest state, had another vital objective: it served the exigencies of the Greek agenda, known as the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), namely Greek irredentism and expansionism against the Ottoman Empire. The inclusion of Alexander the Great in the narrative was crucial for Greece's claim to Ottoman Macedonia. But the Byzantine link was even more indispensable. By 'proving' that the modern Greeks were direct descendants of the Byzantines and that the Byzantines were 'Greeks', Greece could base its case on historical rights, on being the successor state of an empire (and a Greek one at that) that governed the Balkans and Asia Minor many centuries prior to the arrival of the 'Turks'.

The precise starting date of the Great Idea is 14 January 1844. It was launched in a famous speech by the head of the pro-French party, Ioannis Kolletis as a 'civilising mission' of the Greeks towards the east.[51] Kolettis stated that there were two main centres of Hellenism: Athens, the capital of the kingdom; and the 'City' of Constantinople, 'the dream and hope of all Greeks', specifying that[52]

> The Greek kingdom is not the whole of Greece, but only a part, the smallest and poorest part. A native is not only someone who lives within this Kingdom, but also one who lives in Ioannina, in Thessaly, in Serres, in Adrianople, in Constantinople, in Trebizond, in Crete, in Samos and in any land associated with Greek history or the Greek race….

However strictly speaking Kolettis was not advocating Greek expansionism and aggressive nationalism, but mainly cultural influence cum cultural expansion,[53] but his message by virtue of being vague could be interpreted in multiple ways, including irredentist expansionism.[54]

From the onset of the 1850s until 1822 ('The Asia Minor Catastrophe' as it is known in Greece), the Great Idea was to become the dominant ideology, main foreign policy goal, fixation and *raison d'être* of the small kingdom.[55] There appeared three variants of the *Megali Idea*: (1) the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire as a Greek empire (slogan 'empire or death)'; (2) the gradual move forwards at the expense of the Ottoman state, by the use of military means as well as diplomacy (slogan 'union or death') and (3) a variant that appeared last – trying to create a Greek-Ottoman state through peaceful means in which the Greeks (in view of their great economic power, education and capabilities in the Ottoman Empire) would end up having the upper hand.[56]

Needless to say to the Albanians as well as to the other Balkans peoples (save the self-confident Serbs, who had concocted their own expansionist idea the very same year as Kolletis's concept),[57] the *Megali Idea* seemed a repulsive 'Messianic type' of doctrine aim claiming to be aimed at saving all the Christians of the Balkans from the Ottomans by placing them under the voracious Greeks.[58] As regards South Albania (Epirus), including Janina and Metzovo, it was together with Thessaly (but not Macedonia) one of the regions regarded by none other than Capodistrias as Head of State, as legitimately part of a future consolidated Greece even before the advent of the *Megali Idea*.[59]

Reverting to the Paparrigopoulos grand narrative, the merger of ancient Greece and Byzantine Christianity, though odd, was not frowned upon in Europe at the time. In Greece, it was greeted with relief, as being more 'authentic' and 'natural' than sudden rebirth.[60]

As Tom Nairn, the Scottish theorist of nationalism has aptly put it, the Greeks 'brought about the simplest and most straightforward … secularisation of religion on record'.[61] The modernising Greek intelligentsia[62]

> performed the astonishing feat of convincing the early 19th century Greek- speaking population that it was descendant from the antique gods; and that today this state of affairs was identifiable with being an Eastern Orthodox Christian … few other feats in the history of nationalism can be compared with this one.

And he concludes that as far as 'mythology, identity, psychological security and glamour were concerned', the Greek narrative has few rivals.[63]

The Greek grand narrative, though obviously an ahistorical social construction is regarded as the absolute 'truth' in Greece and among the Greek Cypriots for that matter. Perhaps one reason for its remarkable resilience to date is that it happens to be less farfetched as a social construction and national myth even by many non-Greeks, including scholars, compared to most other national mythologies in the Balkans and beyond. Put differently, it appears less arbitrary than most other 'inventions of tradition'. In lieu of an example, Anthony D. Smith, the respected specialist on nationalism, claims that if a nation is defined on the basis of ethnicity, vernacular language, religion and ensuing culture, a Greek nation may be said to exist in the latter days of the Byzantine Empire, as well as under Ottoman rule, which was led by Greek-speaking clergy. Smith also points to a tenuous cultural link with classical Greece following the revival of Greek philosophy and language in the latter days of the Byzantine Empire.[64] Smith also argues that despite the adoption of a new religion (Christianity), certain ancient Greek traditions, such as the dedication to competitive values, have remained fairly constant, as have the basic forms of the Greek language and the contours of the Greek homeland.[65]

Interestingly, this was by and large the assessment two centuries earlier. It was the dominant view of the philhellenes immediately prior and during the Greek Revolution, in spite of their disappointment with many vices of the modern Greeks which appalled them, such as avarice and most of all their wartime record, which was hardly one of 'civilized warfare'.[66] They were of course philhellenes and no doubt they 'saw' what they expected to see.

In the last 60 years, a 'recurrent perennialist' approach, though different from that of Korais, has gained some ground in Greece, especially in the academic community, but it has not directly challenged the Paparrigopoulos narrative. This approach falls under John Armstrong's 'nations before nationalism',[67] Josep Llobera's nation-creation during the Middle Ages,[68] and Liah Greenfeld and Adrian Hastings's emergence of nations at the level of monarchies and aristocracy prior to the advent of modernity.[69]

The proponents of this school of thought includes distinguished historians, such as Apostolos Vakalopoulos, Nicos Svoronos, George Georgiadis Arnakis, Dionysios Zakythinos (in the 1950s and 1960s) and Speros Vrionis (in the 1970s), as well as political scientist Stephen Xydis. They accept that the ancient Hellenes had disappeared for centuries from the forefront of history, but after a long absence Hellenism made a comeback from the thirteenth century until 1453. The year 1204 (the Crusaders' conquest) is regarded as

the date of the birth of 'New Hellenism'.[70] Xydis has characterised the period from 1204 until 1453 as one of 'proto-nationalism'.[71]

The first attempt to deconstruct the Paparrigopoulos scheme came in the 1920s from Yianis Kordatos, a Marxist self-taught historian and one-time Secretary-General of the Greek Communist Party. Kordatos argued that the Greek uprising of the 1820s was basically a class struggle against oppression from both Ottoman and Greek dignitaries. Moreover, the historical trajectory of the ancient Greeks had ended in 147 BC (with the Roman conquest) and the Byzantines hardly regarded themselves as descendants of the ancient Greeks.[72] But such views gained little momentum and Kordatos was attacked by contemporary historians as well as by the Greek state and Church.[73]

The next challenge to the Paparrigopoulos narrative came much later, from the late 1980s onward.[74] It has been more successful than the previous one by Kordatos, involving not only reputed professional historians but also other social scientists.[75] According to historian Antonis Liakos, a contribution by the late John Petropoulos (an important historian of Greek extraction who was a professor in the United States) was decisive in this regard. Petropoulos argued that Greece had inherited three different traditions: the Hellenic, the Byzantine and the Ottoman. The living past is Ottoman, which the Greeks try to discard by the politics of oblivion.[76] The Ottoman dimension is still alive in the everyday culture of the Greeks, but it is consciously suppressed, for it is seen as the hallmark of backwardness. Petropoulos's view, which 'turned the issue on its head', opened the way for a number of works on the construction of the Greek past.[77] This scholarship has been met with considerable resistance in Greece by the lay public, and even among members of the intellectual elite, including more traditional historians,[78] but it has been able to make considerable inroads so as to be regarded the mainstream scientific historiography, to a far greater extent than in the other Balkan historiographies with a serious scientific tradition, the only exception similar to the Greek case being Turkish historians and social scientists.

Greek nationalism or national identity during the late Byzantium (1400–1453)?

Before concluding it is worth examining the more sophisticated recurrent perennialist approach of proto-nationalism in the last two centuries of the Byzantine Empire, to see whether it holds water. Another query is whether it anticipated or not Helleno-Christianity, the Greek-Orthodox synthesis first concocted by Zambelios.

To begin with, Greek as the official language replacing Latin was adopted in the reign of Emperor Heraclius in the first part of the seventh century AD. In the Byzantine case, the adoption of Greek as the official language and the fact that Greek had become the *lingua franca* (following the Macedonian conquest and almost three centuries of Hellenistic rule) in the wider region did not imply the adoption of ancient Greek culture or ethnicity. The Byzantines

defined themselves in these 1,100 years of their empire, as Romans or *Romaioi* in Greek and their state was *Romania* (Romanland).[79] For the Byzantines, Hellene was tantamount to being pagan and denying Christianity.[80] In fact it was Catholic Europe that depicted the Byzantines as 'Greeks' and the empire as a 'Greek Empire' in order to undermine their credentials as true Christians and as heirs to Rome, as true Romans.[81]

As for the Byzantines, they did not regard themselves as descendants of the ancient Greeks or associated in any way with ancient Greek culture. Characteristically, they were not adherents of the ancient Greek system of government and political culture, and were utterly opposed to the idea of democratic rule. For them time did not start in Homeric terms (à la Paparrigopoulos), but in Biblical terms (in 5509 BC. to be exact). They saw themselves as the continuation of three empires: Babylon, Alexander's Macedonian Empire and the Roman Empire[82]; or according to another rendition they were the fourth empire, following the Assyrian, Persian and Macedonians empires.[83] As for the Byzantine political organisation and culture, it followed the Roman imperial pattern, but as a theocratic 'Christian state', as the 'Christian Oecumene', 'the holy country' of all the Christians in the known world.[84]

Most of the Byzantine emperors were not Romans or Greeks ethnically, but Illyrians, Thracians, Isaurians (a Syrian people) and Armenians.[85] Ethnic Greek rulers dominated the scene only in one-third of the years of the Byzantine Empire, from 1081 until 1453 (starting with Alexios I Comnenus), but all the emperors and the ruling class defined themselves as Romans (*Romaioi*) and not as *Hellenes* or *Graekoi*, for the Byzantine Empire was ethnically blind; ethnic identity was of no significance and not a concept understood (and this also the case later with the Ottoman Empire).

The first glimpse of a sense of being *Hellene* as well as Roman appeared following the 1204, the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade. In the three remnant

Byzantine kingdoms, especially in the one of Nicaea, the 'emperor-in exile' was depicted not only as 'king of the Romans' but equally 'king of the *Hellenes*',[86] with Theodore II Laskaris of Nicaea (1254–1258) ending up calling his state 'a Hellenic country'.[87] But this tendency was abandoned when the emperor-in-exile regained Constantinople, returning to the original designation since the seventh century (under Heraclius) of being the Emperor or *Vasileus* (king) of the Christians.[88]

More vividly in the last 50 years of the shrinking Christian empire (limited to Constantinople and Peloponnese), a small number of highly cultured thinkers, mainly in places at a safe distance from Constantinople (initially Thessaloniki and later especially Mistra in Peloponnese), increasingly began to espouse Hellenic identity, culturally as well as politically. But they were 'a tiny number of intellectuals',[89] the huge majority continued to define themselves as Christians and Romans (*Romaioi*) not as *Hellenes*, although among members of the high intellectual elite *Hellene* was no more tantamount to pagan as it was previously.[90]

The outstanding advocate of Hellenism *tout court* was the major neo-Platonic philosopher Georgios Gemistos (Plethon as he came to call himself) who, in a well-known memorandum to his friend Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (who was a scholar), stated that 'we are Hellenes *to genos* [by origin], as witnessed by our speech and *patrios paideia* [the culture of our fathers]',[91] and called for the rebirth of ancient *Hellas* as a single monarchy inspired by Plato's *Politia*.[92] He claimed that for the *Hellenes* their land was Peloponnese and the neighbouring part of Europe together with its islands. With the empire having shrunk dramatically and at the point of disappearing from the face of the earth, Hellenic identity rather than Roman identity seemed a sensible option for Plethon and his close associates.[93]

But Plethon was hardly a precursor of Helleno-Christianity, being himself a pagan, which made it easier for him to switch to Hellenic identity, but difficult for him to secure a wider audience among the Byzantines.[94] As put by CM. Woodhouse in his monograph on Plethon[95]:

> Although his philosophical outlook was ostensibly conservative and even reactionary, it was in reality prophetic and even revolutionary. There is good reason for calling him both the last of the Hellenes, in the sense of pagans of the classical age, and the first of the Greeks, in the sense of modern nationalists

Obviously Woodhouse had in mind the Korais narrative rather than the one of Paparrigopoulos. However, as put by Donald Nicol, Plethon was 'a dreamer of dreams' and 'an odd one out' and he and his associates had no influence whatsoever in the Byzantine state.[96]

Moreover, as argued by Steven Runciman, '[t]he traditionalists found it hard to accept the new term' of Hellenes, the[97]

> proud boast, placing the Emperor above all other earthly potentates, would be empty if he were merely the monarch of the Hellenes. Still more, to the pious among them it seemed to give too great a sanction to pagan philosophy. They could not forget the older meaning of the term (being a pagan).

The most authoritative rendition of Byzantine identity in its last 50 years remained the original one of Christian cum Roman (*Romaios*). As put by the Aristotelian philosopher and theologian Georgios Scholarios, a contemporary though much younger than Plethon, who was to become the first Patriarch (as Gennadios I) by Mehmed II the Conqueror (he had chosen him for he was anti-Catholic and against the merger of the two Churches): 'I do not think as the Hellenes did' (though he admitted that he spoke Greek as his mother tongue), concluding that for him the most appropriate self-designation was being 'a Christian'.[98] This was undoubtedly the preponderate

view among the people and the ruling elite in the remnants of the empire.[99] Incidentally, Scholarios who had been a friend of Plethon, expressed 'admiration' for his 'learning and moral qualities' and addressed him as 'best and wisest of friends', but ended up accused him of 'heresy and blasphemy' and 'told others that whatever skill' he had in philosophy had been put 'at the service of evil prejudice'.[100]

In any event, with the advent of the Ottoman Empire, the Hellenic dimension disappeared altogether, though it remained alive among leading Byzantine intellectuals of the diaspora living in Europe.[101] We witness it in the cases of Metropolitan Bessarion (a student and close friend of Plethon and himself a neo-Platonic philosopher) later in Rome (from the 1440s onwards) as a Catholic Cardinal acting as the premier of the Papal state; Demetrios Chalkokondyles, who may have been a student of Plethon, who taught classical Greek studies in three Italian universities; Janus Laskaris, a friend of Bessarion; and in Venice (the city of the first and the longest-lived Greek community)[102] particularly with Marcus Musurus, also a friend of Bessarion, who published all the works of Plato and called upon the pro-Greek Pope Leo X to launch a crusade in order to save 'fainting Greece from the Turkish wolf-like tyranny'.[103] Another noted member of the diaspora in Venice was Michael Apostolis who appealed to Roman Holy Emperor Frederick III, 'to destroy this accursed race of Turks and restore the Greeks to their rightful heritage'.[104]

Notes

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4 Marios Hatzopoulos, 'From Resurrection to Insurrection: "Sacred" Myths, Motifs, and Symbols in the Greek War of Independence', in Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (eds), *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past* (1797–1896) (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 85; Marios Hatzopoulos, 'Oracular Prophesy and the Politics of Toppling Ottoman Rule in South-East Europe', *The Historical Review*, 8 (2011), 99–103; Victor Roudometof, 'From *Rum Millet* to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 16:1 (1998), 17–9; Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) [1992], 16–7.
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6 Extract in Politis, 'From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors', 3.
7 Petmezas, 'The Formation of Early Hellenic Nationalism and the Special Symbolic and Material Interests of the New Radical Republican Intelligentsia (ca. 1790–1830)', 59, 61.
8 *Ibid*., 51, 59.
9 Politis, 'From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors', 7; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "'Imagined Communities" and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans', in Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens: Sage-ELIAMEP, 1990), 27; Petmezas, 'The Formation of Early Hellenic Nationalism and the Special Symbolic and Material Interests of the New Radical Republican Intelligentsia (ca. 1790–1830)', 59–60; Roderick Beaton, 'Introduction', in Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (eds), *The Making of Modern Greece*, 5 footnote 8.
10 Politis, 'From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors', 8.
11 Petmezas, 'The Formation of Early Hellenic Nationalism and the Special Symbolic and Material Interests of the New Radical Republican Intelligentsia (ca. 1790–1830)', 60.
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5 The Albanians

Pre-modernism, belated nationalism, origin

A pre-modern landscape

The process of Albanian nation-building was the last to take place in the Balkans in the last decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century,[1] though it was not the last nation to appear in the region. Two more were to follow from the 1930s until today, the Macedonians and the Bosniaks.

The 'Albanian National Awakening' (*Rilindja Kombëtare* or simply *Rilindja*), revival, rebirth or renaissance, started at the elite level by those known as 'national awakeners' (*Rilindasit* in the plural, *Rilindas* in the singular) in the 1840s, as in the case of the Bulgarian National Revival or Renaissance (*Vazrazhdane*), but it remained until the late 1870s in 'embryonic state', contrary to the vibrant nationalism of most of its neighbours.[2]

Interestingly prior to the *Rilindja* there had been three attempts at quasi-independence by formidable high-ranking Ottoman officials who all happened to be ethnic Albanians. They are the attempts by the Bushati family, Kara Mahmud Pasha and Mustafa Pasha Bushati among the Ghegs[3]; by Ali Pasha Tepelenli among the Tosks (see Chapter 3)[4]; and by Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt, who went as far as to threaten the Ottoman Empire, when his son Ibrahim over-run Syria and most of Anatolia in 1833; it was then that the Porte called upon Russia to save them, as then quipped by the Seraskier Pasha (the Ottoman commander in chief), 'a drowning man clings to a serpent'.[5]

Strictly speaking these examples are 'unlikely to win support in popular mythology' as Albanian nationalists.[6] However 'Albanian nationalists could be proud *a posteriori*' of the fact that autonomous territories created by 'their kin became sources of political and cultural inspiration'.[7] But there was more to it.

As regards Ali Pasha in particular, Leake and Pouqueville acknowledge that he was regarded 'a hero' and 'an idol' by the Albanians, and they spoke with enthusiasm and pride for their compatriot.[8] After his fall, 'Ali's example had fired many Albanians with national enthusiasm'[9] and he may 'be credited with promoting, for the first time, the notion of an Albanian identity for the domains under his control'.[10] Half a century later Ali Pasa and the Bushatis 'became heroes in the eyes of Albanian nationalists who viewed their exploits as early manifestations of nationalism'.[11]

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According to the Albanian historian Tajar Zavalani 'The masters of Janina and Shkodér were not nationalists. Even their patriotism can be questioned, although they professed to be Albanians when it suited their purpose' and he points out that 'their main motive for action was lust for power and wealth'.[12] But he is of the view that 'a study of Albanian nationalism in modern times must begin with them' for the following reasons[13]:

> They were able to unite for several decades considerable parts of the country under common administrations, to curb the particularism of numerous local lords, to make clans of differing religions collaborate in peace as in war. Although using different methods both Ali and the Bushatis taught their countrymen lessons in the advantages of centralized government, and by leading Muslims in battle against the Sultan-Caliph they successfully destroyed the belief that every Muslim was a Turk with interests best represented by the Porte. Local solidarity beyond the clan level made its appearance in Albania under their leadership.

Be this as it may, the Albanian landscape remained in a sorry state for most of the nineteenth century. As put by a major *Rilindas*, the thinker and poet Pashko Vasa (Vaso Pasha), a Catholic Albanian who held several high positions in the Ottoman Empire, in a famous poem-manifesto written in 1878, titled *O moj Shqypni* (Oh Albania)[14]:

> Albanians …
> You're split in a hundred factions,
> Some believe in God or Allah,
> Say "I'm Turk," or "I am Latin,"
> Say "I'm Greek," or "I am Slavic,"
> But you're brothers, hapless people!
> You have been duped by priests and hodjas
> To divide you, keep you wretched….
> Wake, Albanian, from your slumber,
> Let us, brothers, swear in common
> And not look to church or mosque,
> The Albanian's faith is Albanianism!

Pashko Vasa's concept of 'Albanianism' as the unifying element, in practice amounted to focusing on language (and the need to toil for a common Albanian literary language and alphabet) and traditions, putting aside religion which divided the Albanians.

The Albanian divisions, backwardness and 'historical delay'[15] were due to several factors, worth referring to in some detail. However before doing so, let us refer to the image of the Albanians as presented by foreigners, however impressionistic and subjective, most of whom had visited geographical

Albania. The reference to the Albanians from the late eighteenth century until the first decade of the twentieth century verges from being harsh and scathing to being warm and admiring towards them. Several books began with a phrase attributed to Edward Gibbon that Albania 'is a country which within the sight of Italy is less known than the interior of America'.[16]

Thomas Gordon in his history of the Greek Revolution, refers to the Albanians as 'unquestionably the most barbarous people in Europe',[17]

> they are bold and enterprising, but at the same time cruel, treacherous, greedy and avaricious. War and robbery are the only employments that they esteem honourable and to these they addict themselves … hiring out their military services to whatever party is willing to engage them as mercenaries in Europe, Asia, or Africa.

Gordon's friend (and friend of Lord Byron), George Finlay in his history of the Greek Revolution, is more generous towards the Albanians. He writes that they 'are proud, insolent, turbulent, and greedy for gain', but possess 'some sterling virtues', they are 'distinguished from the Greeks by their love for truth, and by the honesty that they fulfill their engagements'.[18]

Byron and other British travellers, upon seeing the Albanians and their clans and dress, the *fustanella* (akin to kilt as they saw it) as well as their mountainous environment, tended to associate them with the Scots. Byron who in his 'grand tour' had met Ali Pasha in the winter of 1809 and had been entertained by him in his palace, mused: 'Their mountains seemed Caledonian, with a kinder climate. The kilt, though white, the spare active form, their dialect, Celtic in its sound, and their hardy habits; all carried me back to Morven'.[19]

Byron's positive references to the Albanians are best known in poetic form, in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, his long narrative poem in four parts (cantos), where in canto II he refers in romantic tones to Albania and to the virtues of the Albanians.[20] Elsewhere he again expressed his favourable feelings for the Albanians: 'I like the Albanians much,' he wrote, '[s]ome tribes are Christians, but their religion makes little difference in their manner or conduct; they are esteemed the best troops in the Turkish service.'[21] And Byron added: 'It is a quick-witted race, with keen aesthetic perceptions, a feudal sense of honour and, above all, an individualism which shows itself in moral and intellectual originality. It is a race worth saving'.[22]

John Hobhouse, Byron's travelling companion had the following to say[23]:

> There is a spirit of independence and love of their country in the whole people, that in a great measure, does away with the vast distinction, observable in other parts of Turkey between the followers of the two religions. For when the natives of other provinces, upon being asked who they are will say 'We are Turks' or 'We are Christians', a man of this country answers 'I am Albanian'.

The English journalist and traveller William Miller noted in his book *Travels and Politics in the Near East* (1898)[24]:

> Albania is one of the riddles of the Eastern Question. It seems incredible that a fine country, with at least two harbours possible of development, and within a few hours steam from Italy, should be the most uncivilised land in the Balkan peninsula, and that for centuries no European power should have made any serious attempt to acquire it as a colony. Thus what might be one of the finest countries in Europe, is left in a condition such as nowadays disgraces few Central African tribes.

The prolific leftist British journalist Henry Noel Brailsford, who had travelled extensively and lived for a year in geographical Macedonia (1903–1904) meeting many Albanians, devoted a chapter to them in his 1906 book *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future* (a volume which retains its significance until today as a credible testimony).[25] He begins by pointing out that there is 'no other race in European Turkey which enjoys collectively a reputation quite so unenviable as that of the Albanians. They are the *bêtes noires* of the Embassies, the scapegoats of the Porte' for everything untoward that happens in 'European Turkey'.[26] However, his personal first-hand experience was very different: he says that one is faced with honourable people, able in many fields, and he praises 'their fidelity, their self-respect, their courage, and their sense of honour'.[27] And he mentions favourably Ali Pasha and his many outstanding qualities as well as the impressive contribution, 'heroism and tenacity' of the Hydriot seamen and Souliot military who played a key role in the Greek Revolution.[28]

In 1919, the American brigadier general George Percival Scriven, in an article in the *Geographical Review*, wrote that Albania is 'an almost unknown country of the Balkans', the country of the Shkypetars, the 'Men of the Mountain Eagle'[29]; it is 'as beautiful as fairyland and as rich as the fabled realms of Prestor John, but it is as unknown as the heart of Africa and as ill defined'.[30] But he is confident that 'for them the hour has struck', for this proud and brave people to gain 'freedom' and 'its place in the family of nations'.[31]

Reasons for belated Albanian national identity and nationalism

The reasons for the belatedness of Albanian nationalism and national identity which had put them at a great risk from their voracious neighbours, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria were several and difficult to overcome. And as latecomers to national ideology and identity the Albanians were to pay a heavy price at the end of the day, by being the only nation-state in the Balkans with considerable ethnic homogeneity but with about half of the Albanians living in neighbouring countries.[32]

The main factors for lacking behind in national self-consciousness can be placed under eight headings one reinforcing the other: (1) the split into two linguistic groups and into three religious groups; (2) the Muslim dimension and the consequent opportunities for participation, qua Muslims, in the Ottoman Empire; (3) the Orthodox Christian dimension and the magnetic pull of the Greeks; (4) the foursome administrative division and its consequences; (5) the lack of a literary language and alphabet until the first decade of the twentieth century; (6) the striking illiteracy, perhaps the worst in the Balkans for an ethnic-linguistic group, and the complete lack of Albanian schools until the early 1890s; (7) impoverishment and backwardness more than any other region in the Balkans, an isolation for the Albanians who remained in their original homeland, with physical communication and transportation very difficult, given the almost complete lack of adequate roads and the lack of adequate sea ports; and (8) being largely on their own, without natural allies from the great powers or other states. If one was to put an overall title to these eight reasons for the belatedness it would that the great majority of the Albanians in geographical Albanian were living, anachronistically, in the pre-modern, pre-national age throughout most of the nineteenth century.

The split between Ghegs and Tosks 'was about the same as the difference in language between Lowlands Scots and English', but there were also several cultural differences, with the Ghegs 'remaining in a tribal structure akin to that of the Scottish Highlands, while among the Tosks this structure had decayed, and there was more urbanisation and Ottoman interference'.[33]

It has been suggested that there existed, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a rift between Ghegs and Tosks. Accordingly, the clash between the Tosk Ali Pasha and the Ghegs Kara Mahmud Bushati and Mustafa Pasha Bushati exemplifies this[34]; and that the personal rivalry between them 'had aroused a certain level of jealousy and hostility between the Tosks and Ghegs, which was accentuated among the latter by a suspicion that the former were falling under Hellenic influence'.[35] But this assessment is not very convincing, for the antagonism in question was above all a personal one between all-powerful pashas in the quest 'for their own power' and not for the interests of 'their countrymen'.[36] Characteristically, when the Porte asked Ali Pasha to march against Kara Mahmud, 'Ali managed on various pretexts to avoid taking action', secretly sympathising 'with his compatriot (and at times rival) of the north, as he did not want to weaken an enemy of the Porte'.[37] And each side could buy off members of the other mega-clan as political allies or mercenaries and moreover, as seen in the Ottoman Army of the Balkans, Ghegs and Tosks fought together against the Ottoman foes with no problem arising between them.[38]

In any event far more serious and consequential was the Muslim-Christian division and sense of distinct identity on that basis. And there was the split of Sunni Muslims Tosks and Ghegs on the one hand and Bektashi Tosks on the other to reckon with, the first more traditional and pre-modern, the latter

more modern and from the 1870s onwards at the forefront of Albanian nationalism, as seen in the case of the three Frashëri brothers (see Chapters 6).[39]

Language and customs and traditions as well as a real or imagined history may be the stuff of nationhood, but the lack of a common religion is an obvious hurdle against in-group cohesion. As L. S. Stavrianos has put it, '[t]his meant that whereas religion was unifying force among other Balkan people, with the Albanians it was a disruptive factor, even though mildly so'.[40] He basis this 'mildly so' approach on the view that 'the Albanians did not take religion too seriously'.[41] Indeed the Albanians were among the least religious people in Europe, 'religion sat lightly on the faithful of all denominations' and in various conflicts that ensued 'the religious aspect was always epiphenomenal to the real territorial or social or "honor" issue at stake'.[42] Christians and Muslims 'cultivated two religions: they would practice both baptism and circumcision, and then use Christian and Muslim names and honor Christian or Muslim festivals as the circumstances of any particular occasion might warrant'.[43] But this does not mean that the Albanians were not attached to their religion as seen also by Pashko Vasa's famous poem. Moreover, 'the respective religious communities were traditionally affiliated with external political powers with seats outside Albania'.[44]

Be this as it may, religion 'which had been a strong unifying force in the other Balkan countries, was a divisive element'.[45] As theoreticians of nationalism, such as Miroslav Hroch, Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson argue, the sense of religious identity can play a significant role in bringing about and enhancing national identity, to the extent of course that the two are compatible (as seen in the case of the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Croats, Turks, to mention but a few). Hroch is of the view that ethnic or national identity becomes more powerful with the religious dimension and especially if it is affirmed by existing religious institutions.[46] Smith argues that premodern institutions, such as religion have undoubtedly contributed to the formation of modern nations.[47]

Moving on to the second factor, the Muslim dimension, it is striking that no other ethnic or linguistic group in the Balkans became Islamised to such an extent as the Albanian speakers,[48] which led to the religious split into three religious communities. This was 'a slow and uneven process' that 'was opposed at different periods both in the Catholic north and in the Orthodox south'.[49] The Ottoman conquest as such was also slow and gradual: the first invasion with partial success took place in 1385, at a time when the Albanian cities were thriving, especially Durres, Kruja (Krujë) and Berat[50]; the second which was more pervasive was under Sultan Beyazid in 1394–1396; and the third which reached the Adriatic was under Sultan Murad II in 1423, and in all three instances there was no use of violence for the propagation of Islam. Then came the heroic 24 years of Skanderbeg wars against the Ottomans from 1444 onwards, whose final defeat led to an exodus of Albanians mainly to southern Italy and Sicily but also to the southern Balkans (in today's southern Greece).[51]

Islamisation started from the late sixteenth century and ended in the end of the seventeenth century. In 1520 the Islamised were a mere three percent, but by 1690 it amounted to 70 percent of the Albanian-speaking inhabitants who resided there. This high level of Islamisation was due to a deliberate policy on the part of the Ottoman authorities, the aim being to guarantee as much as possible the loyalty of the Albanian speakers.[52] Until the close of the seventeenth century it was mainly the Catholic Albanian speakers that became Muslims, for the Ottoman Empire 'saw Catholicism as an adversary with whom it could not come to terms', given also the possibility of an attack in the name of Catholicism and this resulted, in many instances, to forced conversion of the Catholic Albanians to Islam.[53] Later from the eighteenth century onward, when Russia became the main enemy of the Ottomans, the Orthodox Christian Albanian speakers were regarded as potential allies of Russia thus pressure was put on them to convert to Islam.[54]

According to Stavro Skendi, there are three main explanations for the 'general lapse to Islam', apart from the aforementioned deliberate policy of Islamisation, by persuasion and occasionally by force on the part of the Ottoman state[55]:

> the desire to avoid the payment of taxes; the attraction of worldly advantages, for in the Ottoman Empire the economic-political basis was religion and not nationality; and the want of a sufficiently large number of intelligent clergy to supply the spiritual needs of the population.

Another reason which led to the conversion of many Albanians to Islam was that as Muslims they were the ally and equal of the 'Turks' who protected them from the encroachments of the Slavs' and gave them 'a sense of security' from their neighbours, not only from the Slavs but later also from the Greeks.[56] Regarding Islamisation in some cases, conversion to Islam was superficial, many had become Muslims 'in name only and secretly adhered to their former faith'.[57]

But Islamisation was far from superficial and their main wider identity, apart from family and clan, was being a Muslim for the Muslim Albanians. This development had the result of making the Muslims, especially those who were not Bektashi, reluctant to mobilise in the national Albanian cause even as late as the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[58]

There were two overlapping reasons for this state of affairs. To begin with according to Florian Bieber[59]:

> In contrast to the Southeastern European Christians, the Muslim inhabitants followed the official religion of the dominant political class of the Ottoman Empire – Islam – a faith that (theoretically, at least) privileged religious belief over ethnicity or nationalism … Although the

> Muslims under Ottoman rule often perceived themselves as different from their co-religionist rulers in Istanbul … they nevertheless shared the religion of the rulers of the Empire and practised a religion that suppressed the development of national identity far more explicitly than did Christianity.

The second reason overlapping the above that made the Albanian majority who were Muslims, 'the last to opt out of the Ottoman Empire' in the Balkans, was that the 'elite structure had always been open to their talented and ambitious sons, which had generally not oppressed them, and toward whose Caliph-Sultan most of them felt genuine religious reverence'.[60] All the Muslims 'had the same legal status irrespective of their background in a system which was meritocratic and preferential to Muslims, whom the Porte regarded as more trustworthy' the result being that the Muslim Albanians 'in leading positions in the Empire was disproportionately high, and the Albanians soldiers were renowned for their military excellence'.[61]

Clearly the Albanians, as Moslems, were 'part of the ruling imperial community'.[62] An impressive number of Muslim Albanians distinguished themselves and rose to the highest positions in the Ottoman Empire,[63] such as generals, admirals, ambassadors, governors, viziers (ministers) or Grand Viziers. Indeed '[s]ome of the finest and bravest Ottoman soldiers' were Albanians.[64] As put by Bieber (and supported by many other scholars)[65]:

> Conversion to Islam opened the possibility for a successful career in the Ottoman Empire for many Albanians. More than any other group in the Balkans, Albanians integrated into the Ottoman hierarchy and achieved high positions in the Empire. From the beginning of Ottoman rule until the seventeenth century, 25 out of 92 grand viziers were of Albanian origin, which is more than those of Turkish origin. Some of the most outstanding military commanders likewise had Albanian roots. These successes transformed the Albanians in the Ottoman Empire into loyal subjects whose future and identity were closely intertwined with the Empire.

According to another estimate 'more than forty' of the 92 Grand Viziers were of Albanian origin that is far more than any other ethnic group, including those of Turkish origin.[66] And they included some of the greatest Grand Viziers, such as Koca Sinan Pasha (a great architect and five times Grand Vizier in the latter sixteenth century) and six of the Köprülü family, with the first in line Köprülü Mehmed Pasha in the mid-seventeenth century.[67]

The Ottoman favour for those of Albanian origin continued undiminished even in the late Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdulhamid II, who clearly favoured them, referring to them as his 'iron barrier' and rallying on Albanians for his personal protection in the palace guard.[68]

This participation also applied to the highest ranks during Abdulhamid's reign, as seen with Grand Vizier Mehmed Ferid Pasha,[69] who was the cousin of Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora (Ismail Qemali), the founder of Albania. Ismail Kemal also held high positions in the Ottoman state, as Governor of Beirut and Tropolis, and had repeatedly met Abdulhamid and it was known that the Sultan 'respected and feared him' at the same time.[70] Worth mentioning is also Pashko Vasa, who after serving in several high positions, was appointed in the delicate position of Governor of Mount Lebanon in 1882, a position he held for ten years until his death.[71] And in the Ottoman Committee on Union and Progress (CUP) set up in 1889, which was later to lead to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, one of its four founding members among the four students of the Imperial Medical School was the Albanian Ibrahim Temo.[72] In 1908 the Albanians played a major role in the Young Turk Revolution and one of the heroes of the Young Turk Revolution was major Ahmed Niyazi Bey who headed the Albanian volunteer units in 1908. And worth mentioning is the role of Ismail Kemal in the organisation of the revolt, the role of Field Marshal Recep Pasha, a highly respected military who was the war minister in the first Young Turk Government of 1908 under Grand Vizier Mehmed Kamil Pasha, and of Mid'hat Frashëri who called upon the Albanian leaders to give their full support to the Young Turks.[73] And it is clear that many Albanian nationalists initially had great faith in the movement of the Young Turks, but their hopes 'were soon dashed when it became apparent that the new administration was just as centralistic as the old one, or even more so'.[74]

The end result of all this was that the Albanians, despite the rise of their nationalism remained loyal to the Porte and their future was hinged on the survival of the empire in the Balkans. As put by Charles and Barbara Jelavich: 'The Albanian national movement was unique in comparison' with the other Balkan national movements 'in that the leaders, at least before 1912, did not wish the Ottoman Empire dismembered, nor did they seek an independent state. Instead, they feared that should the empire fall their lands would be divided among their neighbors. Autonomy within the Ottoman state appeared to be the best guarantee of their national safety'.[75] To conclude, the Muslim conversion to Islam and its effects, high office and so on, was probably the greatest bulwark against Albanian nationalism and the quest for statehood with 'perhaps the greatest effect on the course of their history'.[76]

Characteristically from 1878 until as late as 1912, on the eve of the First Balkan War, the recurring Albanian claims had been for the unification of the administrative regions and for limited autonomy, and in the course of the First Balkan War the Albanians chose to fight alongside the Ottomans (see Chapter 6). And one sees the paradox of major *Rilindasit* being at the same time loyal Ottoman officials, such as Pashko Vasa, Ismail Kemal or the rector of the first Ottoman University, Hoca Hasan Tahsin (Hoxha Hasan Tahsin). There is also the intriguing case of Sami Frashëri, known to the Ottomans as Şamseddin Sami, who is considered among the first

major Turkists in terms of linguistics, and his Turkish Dictionary of 1900 is regarded as a landmark in Turkish lexicography.[77]

The third factor which often tends to be forgotten is 'the strong Greek cultural influence',[78] from the Patriarchate as regards the Orthodox Albanians. And there was also the magnetic pull of the *Rum* qua Greeks or Hellenised, given the prestige of Greek for upwards social mobility (see end of Chapter 1), leaving the Albanian Orthodox Christians with little choice to becoming either fully Hellenised or partly so, via education, with the schools available for the Orthodox Christians in Albanian territories being exclusively Greek for most of the nineteenth century.

Another important inhibiting factor (the fourth) against the early rise of Albanian national identity and nationalism was no doubt the lack of an Albanian administrative, economic and cultural centre, with the Albanian inhabited region of the eastern Balkans divided into three viliayets in 1865, Janina, Monastir (Bitola) and Skhoder, to which Kosovo/Skopje was added as a fourth vilayet in 1878.[79] This division was hardly fortuitous but deliberate on the part of the Ottoman state, so as to not allow the contacts and communication between Albanians that could bring about common mobilisation and revolutionary activity. In order not to permit contacts and communications between Albanians across the vilayets a special official permission akin to a passport was needed for Albanians to travel from one vilayet to another.[80]

This dismal situation had led many Albanians to immigrate to other parts of the empire, in Constantinople/Istanbul, Walachia and Moldavia, Egypt and elsewhere. Prior to the Ottoman conquest, in the thirteenth century and upon the death of Skanderbeg in 1468 but also later until the seventeenth century, a considerable number had emigrated to southern Italy, and were known as Arberesh (*Arbëreshë*) or Italo-Albanians and they lived in southern Italy, in Campania, Apulia, Molise, Abruzzi, Basilatica, Calabria and Sicily. In the fourteenth century and later until the seventeenth century others immigrated to the southern Balkans, in future southern Greece.[81]

As regards the fifth factor, the Ottoman authorities did not permit publications in Albanians or the setting up of Albanian schools.[82] This last provision was unique, for in matters of language and education the Ottomans avoided intervening in the still vast empire and were tolerant on such matters towards other nationalities.[83]

As argued by Miranda Vickers[84]:

> One of the greatest obstacles to the cultural, national and political advancement of the Albanians was that the Ottoman administration's continued refusal to recognize that the Albanians were not Turks but a separate people with a distinct identity of their own. The conversion of so many Albanians to Islam, and the security provided by the Porte against the Slavs and Greeks, had eventually led to a general

identification with Ottoman Turkish, rather than specifically Albanian ideals and aims. Thus the very nature of Ottoman rule delayed the rise of an Albanian national consciousness and a subsequent national movement, and ensured that the Albanians became the last Balkan nation to achieve their independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from the Ottoman denial of a distinct Albanian identity distinct from their own and the prohibition of Albanian publications and schools there was also the sheer fact of the lack of an Albanian literary language and Albanian alphabet well into the first decade of the twentieth century (see Chapter 6).

Moving on the sixth factor, striking illiteracy, the latter was probably the worst in the Balkans, possibly even worse than the Slavophones in Macedonia to the east, the percentage of illiterates up to 98 percent of the population in the four vilayets throughout the nineteenth century.[85] The few who were literate wrote in Ottoman Turkish or Greek or both (as had been the case with Ali Pasha) or in Albanian with Greek, Latin or Arabic letters, having studied in the respective schools given the *millet* tradition, the Muslim Albanians in Ottoman schools, learning Ottoman Turkish, and the Orthodox Christians in Greek schools, notably in the prestigious Zosimaia Lyceum of Janina. Albanian schools, only three, were to make their appearance much later, towards the end of the nineteenth century (in 1887, 1889 and 1901).

Now as to the stark underdevelopment, the Albanians were among the most isolated and backward peoples in the Balkans and in the whole of Europe,[86] in the beautiful mountainous landscape, with recurring forbidding mountain ranges, known as the 'Switzerland of the Balkans' but with an extended pleasant coastline. There were very few roads, most of them only fit for transportation with mules or donkeys between the various mountains.

As pointed out by the Albanian poet, Aleksandër Stavre Drenova, known under the pen-name Asdreni, who lived in Romania (later a poem of his became the Albanian national anthem), when he travelled, in 1903, from the port of Durres to Tirana, a distance of some 40 kilometres, it took him two days of ardent voyage on a mule track, a journey 'fraught with many dangers'.[87] As late as 1912 when Albania declared its independence there were only 150[88] to 200 kilometres[89] of paved road mostly in the south of the country.

Lastly, it has been argued that contrary to the Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians, the Albanians had no obvious external foreign sponsors and that when the external supporters did arrive in the 1910s, that is Austria-Hungary and Italy their sympathy for the Albanian cause was hardly enthusiastic but self-serving, bearing no comparison to what had occurred with the Greeks (in 1821–1830), the Serbs (in 1876–1978) or the Bulgarians (in 1876–1878).[90] This may be true to some extent as regards Vienna and Rome, but the Austro-Hungarian and Italian concern had come earlier from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with both governments interested and

assisting the Albanians, financially and otherwise, to help them in order to arrive at the adoption and codification an Albanian alphabet, to assist them in the publication of Albanian books and other publications, journals, to assist then in the establishment of schools, all of these initiatives aimed at uniting the Albanians and enhancing their distinct culture and national feelings.[91]

Who are the Albanians? Origins

Among the first amateur Albanologists were Leake and Pouqueville (see Chapter 1). But the founders of Albanian studies are regarded the German Joseph Ritter von Xylander, with his 1835 book *Die Sprache der Albanesen oder Schkipetaren* (The language of the Albanians or Skipitars) and the Austrian Johan Georg von Hahn, with his 1853, three volume book *Albanesische Studien* (Albanian studies), although strictly speaking they are not professional researchers either, von Xylander being a major general in the Bavarian army and mainly known for his work on military matters, and von Hahn a diplomat who had served as Austrian consul in Janina.[92]

References to Albanians or to a people resembling them are to be found in Roman antiquity and in the Middle Ages. In the second century AD. Claudius Ptolemy in a map of the region includes a city named Albanopolis, near Durres in Roman Macedonia, and lists the various Illyrian tribes, one of which he calls '*Alvanoi*', who dwelt in the mountains between Durres, Dibra and Albanopolis.[93] Towards the end of the fifth century, the Byzantine writer Stephanos Byzantios, in his dictionary *Ethnica*, refers to a city in Illyria named Arvon, in which lived Arbinioi stating that he derived this information from Polybius (the Greek historian of the Hellenistic period).[94]

The Albanians as such appear for the first time in Byzantine texts in the eleventh century and as having been Christianised around that time.[95] In the eleventh and twelve centuries, they are presented as a separate group, during the reign of Emperor Alexios I Comnenos, notably in the references of his daughter Anna Comnene, in her multi-volume book *Alexias* (Alexiad), devoted to her father's reign.[96] Afterwards the references multiply, including an Italian text of 1281, which identifies an Albanian ruler under the name of Duke Tanuschus Albanensis, who held say in Durres and Skutari (Shkoder). In Latin, the most common terms used were Albanenses or Arbanenses, in the Greek Byzantine texts they are called Alvanoi or Arvanitai and in the later Ottoman texts they are called Arvanis, Arnavud or Arnaut.[97]

The Albanians in the seventh century and eighteenth century, 'two of the darkest centuries in the modern history of Albania', where the greatest conversion to Islam took place, chose to change their name but it is not clear why they did so, only that this mysterious change coincided with the 'conversion of the majority of Albanians to Islam'.[98] They named their country *Shqipëria*, their language *shqip*, with Albanian now appearing as *Shqiptar.* Apparently they were not aware that by doing so they run the great risk of being seen as

a novel people, as latecomers in the region and not as Albanians with another name and as descendants of, say, the ancient Illyrians or Pelasgians.

The origin of the term *Shqipëria, shqip* and *Shqiptar* remains a mystery. Among the Albanians (the self-proclaimed *Shqiptar*) the most popular theory is the one suggested in the work of the nineteenth century Arberesh linguist, Demetrio Camarda (see Chapter 6) that the designation *Shqiptar* means 'people of the eagle' and the term *Shqipëria* means the 'land of eagles'. This interpretation is followed by many others since, including the founder of the Albanian state, Ismail Kemal who writes in his memoirs that it 'is the country where for centuries have lived the "Shkupetars" (the "Men of the Eagle")'.[99]

What is certain is that the Albanians regard 'the eagle' (*shqiponj*ë) as their national symbol, which may have been a totem of an ancient tribe related to them,[100] regardless of the fact that the eagle, single-headed or double-headed, has been the symbol of many states and empires. When Ismail Kemal proclaimed the independence of Albania in 1912, he raised the flag with the symbol of double-headed eagle, which with very few changes is used today by the Albanian state. The use of this symbol was not accidental for it was on the flag and the official seal used by the Albanian national hero, Gjergj Skanderbeg, 500 years ago.[101] By reclaiming Skanderbeg's symbol, Ismail Kemal wanted to propagate, from a political and ideological point of view, the idea of the continuity of the Albanian nation.

Regarding the term '*shqip*' an interpretation suggested by the eminent German linguist of Indo-European languages, Gustav Meyer, the root of the term is to be found in the verb *shqiptoj*, which means pronouncing and/or understanding, which he believed may have been derived from the Latin *excipio* (I feel, I hear).[102] However, according to the eminent Albanian linguist and academic, Shaban Demiraj, Meyer's view is not convincing and he refers to the other eminent Albanian linguist Eqerem Çabej (professor at Tirana University and founder of the Albanian Academy of Sciences), who concluded in his seminal *Studime gjuhësore* (Linguistic studies) of 1975 that the matter has yet to be resolved and remains nebulous.[103]

For Demiraj the word *shqip* was initially used as an adverb whose meaning was 'clearly' or 'openly' and it was used to say that one speaks openly and frankly, and afterwards from this the words *shqiptar* and *Shqipëri* were derived. The first appearance of the word *shqip* had been by Gjon Buzuku in 1555 in a work titled *Meshar*, then in 1618 by Pjeter Budi, in his *Dottrina Christiana*, and in 1685 by Pjetër Bogdani in his *Cuneus Prophetarum*.[104] Budi was probably the first person ever to call for 'the cultivation of the Albanian language' and insisted that 'God did not hear him who prayed in a foreign language and repeated words he did not understand'.[105] Another noted Albanian linguist Xhevat Llosi has argued that the eagle explanation has no scientific basis and has reached a similar conclusion as that of Demiraj, that the root of these terms is to be found in the adverb *shqip* which means 'clearly', 'understandably'.[106]

We now arrive at an even more important question, the Albanian origins, which also remains in part a mystery, with no complete consensus among specialists,[107] save among the Albanians, which may have elements of wishful thinking given the dictates of the national historical narrative. There are several theories as to the origin, far more than regarding any other Balkan nation.

Two theories that have been abandoned although they had been entertained for a while, are the Italian and the Tataric theory. Even less appealing even when they first appeared, were three other theories: the Celtic theory, the Slavic theory and the Scythian theory. The three theories with greater appeal today are the Pelasgian theory and especially the Illyrian theory, followed by the Thracian theory,[108] with the Illyrian theory the one accepted and propagated by the Albanians from the mid-nineteenth century until today. One of the most distinguished Albanian scholars who adopted this approach, from the 1940s until his death in 1980, has been the major historical linguist Eqrem Çabej.[109]

The Italian theory was suggested by the fifteenth century Byzantine historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles (a student of the Byzantine philosopher Plethon), who regarded the Albanians as an extension of the Italians.[110] This theory, in conjunction with the Celtic theory was adopted by Meletios Metropolitan of Athens (in (1728) and Dionisios Pyrros (in (1818). In the early nineteenth century three theories by Greeks writers appeared: Nikolaos Papadopoulos, came up with the Scythian theory that has little appeal, Athanasios Psalidas (see Chapter 1) with a mixed origin that included a Slavic link, and Athanasios Stageritis who supported the Celtic theory but was also one of the first to refer to the possibility of Illyrian origin.[111] The Tataric theory was adopted by Joseph von Xylander, in his *Sprache der Albanesen oder Schkipetaren*, who also claimed that the Albanian language was Indo-German.[112]

Another theory that has been abandoned is the Caucasian theory, which was entertained for a longer period. Its first appearance was in the days of Renaissance humanism, by Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) in the fifteenth century and this was also the approach of Pouqueville in his *Voyage dans la Grèce*.[113] It was supported with various linguistic arguments by the Greek linguist Nikolaos Nikoklis, in his 1855 doctoral dissertation at the University of Gottingen. It seems that one of his aims was to show that the Albanians were not indigenous to the Balkans,[114] which for this very reason his claim led to a sharp reaction on the part of Greek Albanian intellectuals living in Greece.[115] However, this theory reappeared 30 years later, on the part of an Arberesh scholar, Francesco Tajani, in his *Le istoria Albanesi* (1886), where he claimed that the Scythians before arriving in the Balkans had lived for a considerable time in the region of the Caucasus, they spoke an Indian language, of Sanskrit origins, and on that basis claimed that the word *Shqiptar* derives from the Sanskrit word *kship* which means 'I fight' and *tar* which means a blow.[116]

The Palasgian theory is one of the most popular theories and though very difficult to prove given scant information on who were the Pelasgians. They

were called *Pelasgoi* in Greek and were referred to by classical writers, such as Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Thucydides and the three great tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in their plays. They were considered either as the ancestors of the Greeks (or of some Greek ethnic groups, such as the Athenians) or as the indigenous people in the southern Balkans and the Aegean Sea before the arrival of the Greeks. The etymology of the ethnonym *Pelasgoi* is also elusive, with no less than 15 different etymologies suggested by philologists and linguists in the last two centuries, most of them 'fanciful'.[117]

The Pelasgian theory was presented by the Danish-French geographer Conrad Malte-Brun in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and he had picked it up from a book by the Arberesh cleric Angelo Masci, titled *Essai sur l'origine, les moeurs et l'état actuel de la nation albanaise* (1808).[118] According to Malte-Brun who developed the theory further, the Albanians are the descendants of the Pelasgians and the Illyrians, whose language was also related to Dardanian, Greek and Macedonian. This approach was followed by the Arberesh philologist Giuseppe (Zef) Crispi (see Chapter 6).[119]

The Pelasgian theory was also adopted in the mid-nineteenth century by the German linguist August Schleicher, a specialist in early Indo-European languages.[120] According to Schleicher, the older Indo-European languages, such as Greek, Latin, Illyrian 'and connected with the latter Albanian - had their origin in the language of the ancient inhabitants of the Balkan peninsula and the Mediterranean basin, that is, the language of the Pelasgians', thus he 'placed Albanian in an especially close relationship with Greek'.[121] The outcome was that the writers of the Albanian revival 'on both sides of the Adriatic embraced this theory, which showed the antiquity of the Albanians and employed it as an argument in the struggle for the defense of Albanian rights', while the Greek for their part 'used it in order to attract the Albanians to their side'.[122]

The Pelasgian theory gained greater credibility when it was adopted by Johan Georg von Hahn, in his *Albanische Studien* (1854). According to von Hahn, the primeval Albanians were the Pelasgians who spoke a different language from Greek and probably a more ancient one.[123] George Finlay, who devotes a whole chapter on the Albanians,[124] refers to the Pelasgian theory as a possibility, and was convinced that 'researches in modern philology have established beyond question that the Albanian language is an early offshoot of Sanskrit and that its grammar was complete at as old a date as the oldest Greek dialect', and in a footnote refers to the works of Leake and von Hahn as the 'best works on Albania'.[125]

The Illyrian theory is older but it was established following the Pelasgian one. Its main origin is to be found in the Swedish linguistic and historian Johann Erich Thunmann, in his 1774 book titled *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der östlichen europäischen Volker* (Researches on the history of the east European peoples), where he also refers to the Thracians as having 'a share in the formation of the Albanian people'.[126] But his approach was

tentative and based on historical rather than linguistic evidence.[127] Interestingly that Albanian originates from Illyrian was the conclusion reached in the early eighteenth by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, after a cursory look at a few Albanian words.[128]

Others inclined to follow the Illyrian theory were Leake,[129] Holland,[130] as well as Gordon who regards it 'more natural and probable' that they derive from the 'ancient Illyrians'.[131] The German geographer Adam Christian Gaspari came out with a curious view that some Albanians spoke along the lines of ancient Illyrian, while others spoke along Slavic lines.[132]

On the Greek side, the Illyrian theory was adopted by an important figure of the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, the philosopher and historian Konstantinos Koumas, in a ten-volume book devoted to world history (1830–1832); and also by the Greek national historian Paparrigopoulos, who regarded the Illyrians related to the ancient Greeks.[133]

The Illyrian theory was established scientifically with the work of Gustav Meyer, in his 1882 book *Albanesische Studien* (Albanian studies), in which it was also well pointed out that Illyrian as well as Albanian are Indo-European languages.[134]

As far as the Albanians are concerned the Illyrian theory predominates since the end of the nineteenth century, although there is some reference to the Palasgian theory as supplementary the Illyrian theory, both aimed at establishing the Albanians as an indigenous people of the Balkans, as old as the Greeks or possibly even older than them, given the possible Pelasgian origins (see Chapter 7).[135]

Today it is clear that the Illyrian theory has the greater number of supporters not only in Albania but also outside Albania. According to British Albanologist Noel Malcolm, 'modern scholarship recognizes a strong balance of probabilities in favour of the view that they indeed descendent from the ancient Illyrians'.[136] And he points out that the evidence for this is 'primarily linguistic' and 'has become clear only with the development of the modern (twentieth-century) science of historical linguistics'.[137]

However, the matter of the Albanian origins is far from closed. As far as Illyrian is concerned the only certainty, following Meyer's contribution, is that it is an Indo-European language. Despite the various disagreements, one thing seems more or less certain: the Albanians do not derive from people who arrived in the Balkans fairly recently, as in the case of the Slavs, the Bulgars or the Ottoman Turks. They are almost certainly the descendants of one or more of the ancient people of the Balkans.[138] The Serbs in particular have been among those most opposed to this view. Given their aim for exodus in the Adriatic Sea, they wanted to delegitimise any Albanian claims to autochthony in the region.[139] What is certain is that if the Albanians have indeed ancient ancestors they are probably the Illyrians.[140]

There are also two other plausible theories existing until today: one is that they are Dacians, the other that they are Thracians. In the nineteenth century

K. Pauli and H. Hirt maintained that they are the ancestors of both, for these two ancient peoples were linguistically close to each other.[141]

After the Second World War, the Dacian approach is mainly associated with the Bulgarian linguist and philologist Vladimir Georgiev, with considerable contribution in ancient Balkan languages. The grounds for his Dacian theory of the origin of the Albanians include the following: (1) Illyrian toponyms from antiquity do not follow Albanian phonetic laws; (2) the marine terminology in Albanian is borrowed from different languages, suggesting that the Albanians were not originally a coastal people; (3) more crucially, few ancient Greek loanwords exist in Albanian, if they had been neighbours for centuries in antiquity they would have had more common words; (4) no source refers to Albanians in the Albanian region until the ninth century; (5) about a hundred Romanian words are similar only to Albanian words. And Georgiev's conclusion is that Albanian is 'a semiromanized Dacian-Moesian language'.[142]

In recent decades the Thracian theory has also been supported by the German historian and philologist Gottfried Schramm, in his 1994 book titled *Anfäange des Albanischen Christentums* (The Origins of Albanian Christianity). Schramm links the Albanians to the ancient Thracian tribe of the Bessi, which lived in western and southern Bulgaria, who when Christianised were pushed westward in the ninth century acquiring the name of their new homeland, Albanians.[143]

Malcolm, however, is convinced that the Thracian theory of Georgiev and Schramm is superseded by more recent research.[144] On the contrary, the American historian of the Balkans, John Van Antwerp Fine, toys with Georgiev's theory, which he regards as having, as he puts it 'serious (non-chauvinistic) arguments'.[145] And he adds: 'though they are not conclusive, the arguments for the Dacian origin of the Albanians have strong points and cannot be summarily dismissed. More evidence is needed which, owing to the nature of our sources, may never be obtained'.[146] His final conclusion is a combination of Illyrian and other influences. As he puts it, the Albanians are an Indo-European people, 'probably descended from the ancient Illyrians, living now in Albania as well as in Greece and Yugoslavia'.[147] And Fine makes the following clarification[148]:

> the Albanians did not have a single ancestor in one or the other of these pre-Slavic peoples; the present-day Albanians, like all Balkan peoples, are an ethnic mixture and in addition to this main ancestor they contain an admixture of Slavic, Greek, Vlach, and Romano-Italian ancestry.

And he also refers to impact from other peoples who arrive in the Balkans before the Slavs: '[l]large numbers of Celts had passed through earlier, leaving their contribution to the gene pool as well as a wide variety of cultural (particularly artistic) influences', the Celts and '[d]ifferent Germanic peoples

(Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Gepids)', who 'raided and settled (both on their own and as Roman federate troops) in the Balkans in large numbers over three centuries (third to sixth)'.[149]

Malcolm also points out, when criticising the Albanian myth of complete ethnic homogeneity and cultural purity (see Chapter 7) that 'no Balkan population has remained in a watertight compartment', all of them 'have undergone ethnic interminglings of many different kinds'.[150] And in the Albanian case they no doubt include Romans, Slavs, Greeks and to a lesser extent Turks, 'the gene-pool of the Albanians contains many different elements, so too their language'.[151]

The German historian and Albanologist Georg Stadtmüller refers to the considerable influence of Latin in the Albanian language and to a lesser extent of Slavic dialects and of Greek. In his 1942 study, titled *Forschungen zur albanischen Frühgeschichte* (Research in Early Albanian History), which is based on a study of the Albanian language and its loanwords from Latin and other languages, he argues that the original homeland of the Albanians, who until their entry into European history around 1,000, were transhumant herders, is probably the Mat region, the valley of the Mat River (a river in north-central Albania) that is situated in more than 1,000 metres altitude, surrounded by mountains that make it a natural fortress from foreign intrusions.[152]

Reverting to the possible Illyrian origins, according to Robert Elsie, the Canadian linguist and specialist on Albania, we 'lack definitive proof that Illyrian' is 'the ancestor of modern Albanian'.[153] And 'whether or not they stem directly from the ancient Illyrians, as is widely assumed by the modern Albanians, or from the Dacians or Thracians or some other ancient Balkan people or peoples, is very much open to question'.[154] Albanian, he argues, is 'genetically related to all of the surrounding languages of the region (Slavic, Greek, Romance)' but its[155]

> historical evolution has been extraordinarily complex since ancient times, making it a nightmare for diachronic linguists. To an original ancient Balkan language component, whatever it may have been, was added a strong, almost overwhelming stratum of Latin and Romance vocabulary, and well as much Slavic and, in later times, a good deal of Turkish and some Greek influence.

But according to Elsie two things are certain: firstly that Albanian 'was not much influenced by ancient Greek', thus it seems that they were not 'direct neighbours of the ancient Greeks'; and secondly, 'there are numerous curious lexemes (over 100 of them) that occur only in Albanian and in Romanian' and 'as such are very old', which 'leads us to suppose that the ancestors of the Albanians and the ancestors of the Romanians were in close contact at some time, probably as transhumant shepherds in the interior of the southern Balkans'.[156]

The British archaeologist John Wilkes, one of the foremost specialists on the Illyrians who is well aware of the theory of the Illyrian origin of the Albanians, is of the view that 'the Albanian culture, as fascinating and varied as any in that quarter of Europe, is an inheritance from several languages, religions and ethnic groups known to have inhabited the region since prehistoric times, among whom were the Illyrians'.[157]

But who were the Illyrians?

Illyrians

The Illyrians are undoubtedly an ancient people but with no significant contribution culturally and otherwise, though they did create states of their own and were known in antiquity to their neighbours as ferocious warriors. They were defeated under their most famous King Bardylis, by the Macedonians under Philip and again by Alexander the Great (and many thousands of Illyrians served under Alexander in his Asian conquest),[158] and again defeated in 167 BC by the Romans under Lucus Anicius Gallus who defeated King Gentius, the last Illyrian king.[159]

The Romans and especially the ancient Greeks regarded the Illyrians as backward people. Moreover, the Illyrians comprised of several tribes, the most prominent were 11, one of which were probably the Alvanoi mentioned by Ptolemy, who in his famous map included a settlement named Alvanopolis.[160]

According to the Albanians, the Illyrians lived in present-day Albania and a part of Epirus. According to the Greeks as well as several foreign researchers, the Illyrians lived further to the north in the littoral of former Yugoslavia and were pushed to the south by the massive Slavic wave that appeared from the sixth century onward. Also, the Greeks today are of the view that the Illyrians were not Molossians, an ancient Greek tribe living in Epirus (the Albanians in their narrative tend to regard the Molossians as Illyrians), whose most celebrated leader was the great military commander King Pyrrhus and who, contrary to the Illyrians, were permitted to participate in the major athletic festivals, such as Olympic games (only Greeks could participate until the Roman conquest).[161]

More crucially, the available sources regarding the Illyrians and their language are sparse. Illyrian was not a written language, thus the Illyrians have not left texts or inscriptions, and what is available until today are only some 30 personal names and a few place-names, all of them by classical authors, with the names and places in Greek or Latin letters, without even one existing wording or phrase in Illyrian.[162] And we are not even certain whether they called themselves Illyrians or that this was 'other defined' by the Greeks and later by the Romans.[163] But one thing is certain, '[t]to themselves, as to the Roman and Greeks, the Illyrians were a race apart'.[164] The first who referred to their existence were the Greek historians Herodotus and Hecateaus.[165] But it is Thucydides who established a place for the Illyrians 'on the world stage',

as it were, in view of the fact that they were associated with one of the triggering events of the Peloponnesian War, the clash between Corcyra (Corfu) and Epidamus (modern Durres) in a territory occupied by the Taulantii 'barbarians, an Illyrian people' (one of the 11 Illyrian tribes).[166]

In 167 BC, Illyria became part of the Roman Empire, though the Roman province of Illyricum which extended from the Danube to the Albanian Drin in the border with Macedonia, was a region far greater than that inhibited by 'real Illyrians'.[167] Although the region remained 'relatively uncivilised' when viewed by comparison to the Greeks and Romans, Illyria 'was not without significance in the Roman Empire', for there was the highly important Via Egnatia created by the Romans which run through Illyrian territory.[168]

But more significantly, from the late second century onward, as a result of Emperor Septimius Severus having replaced the Praetorian Guard with men from Illyria, an increasing number of Roman generals and a little later Roman emperors hailed from Illyria, known to the Romans as *Illyriciani*.[169] The first noted general was Valerius Maximianus in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, commander of several legions. The first Illyrian emperor was Maximus, followed decades later by Aurelius Claudius, the formidable Domitus Aurelianus, the pacifist Probus, Carus and the important emperors Diocletian, Galerius and Constantius. And even Constantine the Great was of Illyrian origin and other lesser emperors in the Western Roman Empire, such as Jovianus and Valentinian. In the Eastern Roman Empire, Emperor Justin in the sixth century was Illyrian, followed by his nephew, none other than Emperor Justinian the Great.[170]

Notes

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18 George Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861), vol. I, 38.
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20 'Land of Albania! where Iskander rose,/Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,/… . Fierce are Albania's children, yet they lack/Not virtues, were those virtues more mature./Where is the foe that ever saw their back?/Who can so well the toil of war endure?/… Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,/When Gratitude or Valour bids them bleed/Unshaken rushing on where'er their chief may lead'. Quoted in Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 67.
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151 *Ibid*., 80.
152 Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 429. See also http://www.albanianhistory.net/1936_Stadtmueller/index.html
153 Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', location 250.
154 *Ibid*., location 416.
155 *Ibid*., location 442.
156 *Ibid*., 447–53.
157 Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 280.
158 Nicholas Hammond, 'The Relations of Illyrian Albania with the Greeks and the Romans' in Winnifrith (ed.), *Perspectives on Albania*, 36.
159 Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 173–5; Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', locations 279–85.
160 Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', locations 211–50.
161 For the last point see Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 104.
162 *Ibid*., 3–4, 67; Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', locations 250–9.
163 Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 3.
164 Anthony Harding, 'The Prehistoric Background of Illyrian Albania', in Winnifrith (ed.), *Perspectives on Albania*, 15.
165 Harding, 'The Prehistoric Background of Illyrian Albania', 14; Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 94.
166 Harding, 'The Prehistoric Background of Illyrian Albania', 14; Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', locations 250, 292–8.
167 Harding, 'The Prehistoric Background of Illyrian Albania', 14.
168 Stephen Hill, 'Byzantium and the Emergence of Albania', in Winnifrith (ed.), *Perspectives on Albania*, 41.
169 Elsie, 'The Early History of Albania', location 369.
170 Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 262–7. See also Charles M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 35, 38, 40; John W. Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 75; Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 21; Abadzi, 'Historical Greek-Albanian Relations', 49; Hill, 'Byzantium and the Emergence of Albania', 41.

6 The rise of Albanian nationalism

Albanian national identity in the making: the Rilindja

The national liberation movement, known as Albanian National Awakening (*Rilindja Kombëtare*) started in the second half of the nineteenth century and ended with the separation of Albania from the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Albanian state in 1912. The choice of the word *Rilindja (Rebirth)* serves a specific purpose. It is intended to bridge two eras: the era of 'the existence of the Albania nation' before the '500 years of Ottoman occupation' and the era of its existence anew after these five centuries. In this way the Albanian nationalist ideologues wanted to create the myth of considerable historical depth on the part of the Albanian nation and propagate the surreal idea that during these 500 years the Albanian nation had been in a 'lethargic sleep reminiscent of death' which moreover implies a zero connection between the Albanians and the Ottomans.

The sense of a separate Albanian national identity was very limited prior to the late 1870s, and was the realm of intellectuals outside geographical Albania, mainly in Italy. Albanian nationalism started developing as 'a form of Albanianism held by a handful of intellectuals interested in the language of the people and folklore, which affirmed the existence of a nation, but without trying to diffuse this idea outside a small circle'.[1] As Nathalie Clayer points out, the printed press was to play an important role in this process, along Benedict Anderson's and Ernest Gellner's notion of printed capitalism role in the rise of various nationalisms. The first periodical was *Pelasgos* published by Anastasios Pykaios (Anastas Byku) in Lamia in Greece, in 1860, and the second periodical was published in 1878.[2] Through these periodicals 'the existence of an Albanian nation is affirmed for the first time within the international public space'.[3]

The first ideologue and *Rilindas* (awakener) in the Ottoman Balkans was the lawyer and scholar Naum Veqilharxhi (born Naum Panajot Lazar Bredhi), who was born in Vithkuq a village near Korca. He lived most of his life in Wallachia and had been a member of the *Philiki Etairia* and as a student took part in the uprising there under Ypsilantis and Vladimirscu (see Chapter 2). Veqilharxhi was the first Albanian in the Balkans to come forward with the

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idea of the existence of an Albanian nation. He pointed out that the sorry state of Albanian culture and the lack of self-consciousness was due to the lack of Albanian schools and of an Albanian alphabet. In a little spelling book he published in 1844–1845, titled *Evëtori Shqip Fort i Shkurtër* (The most Useful and Concise Albanian Alphabet) in Greek with Latin letters, in Greek titled *Procheiron albanikon alfabitarion* (A rudimentary Albanian alphabet), he created his 33-letter Vithkuqi alphabet as it came to be known, comprised of completely new letters (which at a first glance seem like the cursive Armenian).[4] The little spelling book was distributed throughout southern Albania and was reportedly received with enthusiasm.[5] Veqilharxhi was persecuted by the Ottoman authorities as well as by the Patriarchate (the Albanians claim that he was poisoned by Greek Orthodox fanatics upon instructions from the Patriarchate),[6] both of them adverse to the rise of Albanian nationalism.[7]

The first spark of Albanian cultural nationalism developed mainly within the Albanian diaspora in southern Italy, among the Arberesh (*Arbëreshë*), the descendants of those Albanian who fled the Ottoman Empire following the death of their legendary leader, Gjergj Skanderbeg in the fifteenth century, when the Ottoman conquered the Albanian-inhabited regions.[8] It was the educated Arberesh who in the first part of the nineteenth century and as late as the 1860s were the protagonists in the quest for the Albanian origins that would lead to Albanian self-identity qua distinct cultural and ethnic group and ultimately a nation.[9]

It was the Arberesh intellectuals who constructed an Albanian nation 'in contrast to the Greeks' and also wanted 'to differentiate themselves from the Italo-Greek community in order to preserve their specific Uniate ecclesiastical-educational privileges'.[10] One of their main aims was to present the present-day Albanians as descendants of the Pelasgians and hence as the oldest indigenous people of the Balkans, prior to the advent of the Greeks. The Arberesh intellectuals were also the 'first builders of a national pantheon', that included King Philip and Alexander the Great of Macedonia, King Pyrrhus and 'the actual Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg' (1405–1468).[11]

The first such contributions were by Angelo Masci, Michele Scutari and Giuseppe Crispi. The lawyer and scholar Angelo Masci, in his 1807 study published in Naples with the title *Discorso sull'origine, costumi, e stato attuale della nazione Albanese*, which influenced Conrad Malte-Brun (see Chapter 5), who republished it in French, with the title *Essai sur l'origine, les moeurs et l'état actuel de la nation albanaise*, with his own critical annotations in his multi-volume *Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l'histoire*.[12] Masci maintained that the Albanians are the descendants of the Epirots, Illyrians and Macedonians (the latter being distinct from the Greeks), with all three having a language which was 'substantially the same'.[13] He claimed that the Albanians were a separate 'barbaric nation' that had retained its customs and traditions and he made sure to insist on the differences from the neighbouring

Greeks. Masci is probably the first to include in the Albanian pantheon of heroes, Scanderbeg, which he placed together with King Pyrrhus as well as Alexander the Great whom he regarded as Illyrians (such views resonated later in the Albanian national mythology, see Chapter 7).[14]

A contemporary of Masci was Michele Scutari, a senior priest in the region of Potenza (Basilicate) who expressed similar views, pointing to the differences between the Albanian and Greek languages and he suggested the use of Latin as a the most appropriate alphabet for writing in the Albanian language.[15]

The next important Italo-Albanian figure was the philologist Giuseppe (Zef) Crispi, professor of ancient Greek at the University of Palermo. Crispi (who was the uncle of Italian statesman Francesco Crispi) was inspired by the work of Malte-Brun and claimed in his work on the Albanian language, titled *Memoria sulla lingua Albanese* (1831), which was the first ever monograph on the Albanian language, that the original source of the Albanian language was Pelasgian.[16] He maintained that the Albanian is the ancient 'mother tongue' that existed well before Greek and it was in use by the Pelasgians, the Dardanians, the Phrygians and others ancient peoples.[17] Based on Malte-Brun he pointed to the warlike nature of the Albanians claiming that the word *shqiptar* derives from *skifos*, which means 'a man in arms'.[18]

After Crispi, there were three outstanding figures: the poet Girolamo de Rada, the writer Vincenzo Dorsa and the linguist Demetrio Camarda. Worth mention are also the poet and linguist Giuseppe Schiro and the lawyer and publicist Anselmo Lorrechio, with his journal *La Nazione Albanese*.[19]

Girolamo de Rada (Jeronim de Rada in Albanian) from Calabria, author of a number of bilingual collections of poems (in Italian and Albanian), is the most characteristic figure of 'Albanism among the Italo-Albanians'.[20] He exalted the role of Skanderbeg as a great Albanian national hero in his poem *Skanderbeg* and sang 'nostalgically of the heroic past of the Albanian forefathers', thereby 'raising hopes for Albanian revival'.[21] In his work titled *Antichità della nazione albanese* (1864), following Crispi he came up with the idea that the Albanian language and nation is older than Greek and claimed that the ancient Greek polytheism is but a more systematic presentation of the religion of the Pelasgians.[22]

Writer and scholar Vincenzo Dorsa alluded to the coming of an Albanian *Risorgimento* and developed considerably the Pelasgian theory. In his 1847 book, titled *Su gli Albanesi. Ricerche e pensieri*, his aim was to 'revive in public opinion the rights of an illustrious nation, but one that is little known', the main reason for this lack of knowledge being that it is mistakenly confounded with the Greeks.[23] Based on the view of travellers who had visited Albania as well as the stance taken by previous Italo-Albanians, he argued that ancient Albania corresponds to Illyria, Macedonia and Epirus. And that the ancient Albanians are in fact Illyrians, Macedonians and Epirotes, while the modern Albanians are Albanians and Epirotes. The Pelasgians were the most ancient people of the Balkans who arrived there from Asia Minor

around 2000 B.C. and remained firmly in Thessaly, Epirus and Macedonia, while further south there was an impure mixture that led to the formation of the Greeks. The Albanian language existed before Homer and was what remained of the original Pelasgian language. As in the case of other Italo-Albanians before him, Dorsa, makes Skanderbeg a central figure but also Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus as well as Alexander's father Philip. He also refers to Ali Pasha of Janina, Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt as important Albanians, and he is against the Ottoman Empire and Islam which he associates with tyranny and atrocities. He also makes reference to the 'important contribution of the Albanians' (the Christian Albanians) in the Greek War of Independence, but points out that Albania has not been able to enjoy this kind of independence.[24]

The liberal thinker Demetrio Camarda (Dhimitër Kamarda in Albanian), a Uniate priest, a school teacher and above all a philologist and linguist, does not follow the more nationalist approach of the other Arberesh figures and stands at a higher level of scholarship and sophistication, being much more knowledgeable of linguistic and philological theories. He was of the view that the Albanians are related to the Latins as well as to the Greeks and he urged the union of Albanians and Greeks. In the mid-1860s he published two volumes of philology and comparative grammar, which also included Albanian folklore poetry, titled *Grammatologia comparata della lingua Albanese* (1864) and its *Appendice* (1866) where he used for Albanian the Greek alphabet.[25] One of his aims was to prove the 'Thracian-Pelasgian or Greco-Italian nature of the spoken *ab antico* idiom'.[26]

Camarda followed Hahn in regarding the Albanians the descendants of the Illyrian-Macedonians and Epirotes, with the first corresponding to the Ghegs and the second to the Tosks. He was of the view that Pelasgian was the original 'language of the Gods of Homer', which later developed into Greek, Latin and Albanian, all of them self-standing languages on an equal footing, and not one of them, Albanian, a dialect of another language, say Greek; and he rejected Fallmerayer's view that there was no relationship between the Albanian and Greek languages. Camarda named the Italo-Albanians, Greek-Albanians, '*greco-albanesi*'[27] and alternated between writings Albanian in Latin letters and Greek letters, and he, like Rigas, supported the formation of a Balkan federation (see Chapter 1) and especially of a Greek-Albanian federation, with either side having its own language, but with Greek the overall official language, for he maintained that Albania could become fully civilised only if it associated itself with Greece.[28]

As for the Muslim Albanians, according to Camarda, they mainly cherished their freedom and were not real Muslims, having previously been Christians, something they are fully aware as seen by the fact that they often take part and enjoy Christian holidays and feasts, moreover a number of them are crypto-Christians.[29]

The poet Giuseppe Schiro from Sicily, 'perhaps the greatest of Italo-Albanian poets',[30] also referred 'to the glories of the past to assert the rights

of Albania to independence' and in his *Albanian Rhapsodies*, he deals, in the first part, with the siege of Kruja (Krujë, Croya), Skanderbeg's capital, by the Ottomans in 1446. In his poem 'The Foreign Land' he sings the origin of the Albanians from the Pelasgians, the Albanian warlike virtues, as seen with Skanderbeg's exploits, and he also refers to Ali Pasha and his times.[31]

Dora d'Istria, the penname of the Albanian writer and feminist Duchess Elena Ghika (Gjika in Albania), who lived in Romania (a scion of the Phanariot Ghika family) and Italy, followed the same line as the Italo-Albanians and was in contact with them. Her written works are less scientific than those of her Italian colleagues and at times border on the pseudo-scientific, but they are eloquently written and had considerable appeal to the literate Albanians and contributed to the rise of Albanian nationalism.[32] Her most worthwhile texts are those devoted to the Albanian nation, such as the booklet *Gli Albanesi in Rumenia* and an article titled 'Albanian identity on the basis of folk songs', which Camarda made sure to translate into Albanian in 1867.[33] Dora d'Istria greatly admired the Greek civilisation of antiquity and like Camarda was of the view that there existed a close relationship among Albanians, Greeks and Latins. As for the pantheon of Albanian heroes she placed Philip, Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus, as well as Aristotle (who originated from southern Macedonia) and regarded Skanderbeg as the most characteristic heroic Albanian patriot.[34]

This emphasis on Albanian identity was duly appreciated and enthusiastically adopted among the Albanian intellectuals and activists living in the Ottoman Balkans. It also influenced the Albanian diaspora in Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt and lastly in the US, with all of them contributing to Albanian national identity and nationalism.

In the small Kingdom of Greece, 20–25 per cent of its inhabitants in the nineteenth century were Albanians (Arvanites),[35] with Albanian clearly as their mother tongue, even though there were no Albanian schools or alphabet, with official Greece discouraging any notion of Albanian national identity and nationalism (see Chapter 8). Yet despite the discouragement and adverse climate in the Kingdom of Greece, with the Albanian-speakers simply regarded as Greeks and an inseparable part of the 'Greek race', which of course they were not, there was a glimpse of Albanianism. Four intellectuals are worth mentioning. They are Tasos Neroutsos, Anastas Byku/Anastasios Pykaios, Anastasios Koulouriotis/Anastas Kullurioti and Panayotis Koupitoris.

Tasos Neroutsos was born in Athens and studied medicine and philosophy in Munich with a scholarship from the King of Bavaria and lived mostly in Egypt as a practicing physician and amateur archaeologist. He was supportive of written Albanian with the use of the Latin alphabet and was close to Gustav Meyer (see Chapter 5) whom he assisted in his Albanian studies. He translated into German the works of Byron and Xylander that referred to the Albanians and wrote an Albanian (Arvanite)-German dictionary published by Meyer, which retains its value today for it presents the state of spoken Albanian in Greece at the time.[36]

Anastasios Pykaios (Anastas Byku) was a journalist and teacher of Greek. Contrary to the other three he was not born in Greece but in Ottoman Albania in a village near Tepelena and had been a pupil of the Zosimaia Lyceum of Janina before settling in Lamia in Greece. While in Lamia he published a weekly paper named *Pelasgos/Pellazgu* that appeared in Greek and in Albanian with Greek letters. He was of the view that Greek and Albanian are related languages and that the two peoples are also linked by Christian Orthodoxy and it would be to their benefit to unite (for this stance he was criticised by Albanian nationalists). He supported Hahn's Pelasgian theory as well as the Illyrian theory and called for written Albanian (though he avoided mentioning with which alphabet) and was persecuted by the Greek authorities who closed down his paper after a year of publication. He later came out with a publication named *Prometheus o Pelasgos* (Prometheus the Pelasgian).[37]

Anastasios Koulouriotis (Anastas Kullurioti) was from the Albanian-inhabited island of Salamis (commonly known as Koulouri) and had lived and studied in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s where he thrived. Upon returning to Greece a rich man he was the representative of the Protestant British and Foreign Bible Society and became the most dynamic Albanianist in Greece. In 1879 he published a weekly newspaper called *I Foni tis Alvanias* (The Voice of Albania) in which we voiced the need for Albanian independence and called upon Europe to assist the Albanians in this endeavour, at the least rendering Albania autonomous, as had previously been done with Serbia and Montenegro and currently Bulgaria. He disagreed with another well-known Albanian, the wealthy entrepreneur Konstantinos Zappas who lived in Romania and supported an Albanian-Greek union (and became one of the foremost Greek benefactors). Koulouriotis was not adverse to Greek-Albanian collaboration and hoped that the Greeks could support Albanian independence. But he became disappointed with the haughty Greek attitude towards the Albanians and was highly critical of Greek nationalism and expansionism in southern Albania, making the point that the Albanians had made no claims to Attica, Boiotia and other Greek regions with compact Albanian populations. Koulouriotis's main scholarly work was *Alvanikon Alfavitarion* (Albanian ABC) (1882) with which he tried to establish a written Albanian language with Greek letters.[38] He also suggested the teaching of Albanian in Greek schools, bilingual education and the representation of the Albanians in the Greek Parliament, all of which were unacceptable to the nationalist Greece of the nineteenth century in the throes of the *Megali Idea*.[39]

The fourth intellectual was Panayotis Koupitoris, a school headmaster from Hydra who had studied literature at the University of Athens and had collaborated for a number of years with Koulouriotis in the publication *I Foni tis Alvanias*. He was a lifelong researcher of the Albanian language and nation. His main scholarly work, written in Greek in 1879, titled *Albanian Studies – An historical and literary essay about the Albanian nation and its language*, is a well-structured study of the historical and philological of the

Albanian language and people, in which he tried to prove the Pelasgian origin of the Albanians that made them a people older than the Greeks in the southern Balkans.[40] He regarded the Albanian a language related to the Greek and Latin family of languages, but older due to its Pelasgian origin and he, like Pykaios and Koulouriotis, was resentful of how Greece treated the Albanian language. And he left an unpublished dictionary of the Albanian language.[41]

From 1860 until the turn of the century an extended network had been created of Albanian intellectuals and activists who had contacts, corresponded with each other, exchanged views, tried to coordinate their activities and wrote extensively propagating the Albanian cause. They were in Italy, in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt and lastly the US. They included in Italy de Rada, Dorsa, Camarda, Lorrechio, Schiro and others; d'Istria in Romania and later in Italy; in Ottoman Albania and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire (especially in Constantinople/Istanbul) the three Frashëri brothers, Konstandin Kristoforidhi, Jani Vreto, Thimi Mitko, Pashko Vasa, Zef Jubani, Gjergj Fishta and others; in Greece Pykaios, Koulouriotis and Koupitoris; in Bulgaria, Shahin Kolonja, Dervish Hima, Lumo Skendo and Kristo Luarasi; and in Egypt Neroutsos, Thymi Mitko, Spiro Dine, Jani Vruho, Philip Shiroka, Thimi Krei, Loni Logori, Andon Zako Cajupi and Fan Noli (the latter before leaving for the US in 1906).[42]

The Albanian diaspora in Romania was less homogeneous, with many rich Albanian merchants pro-Greek, such as Zapas, opting for a closer links with Greece, who believed that there was a linguistic affinity between Albanian and Greek, that both peoples were descendents of the original Pelasgians and that Greece could better support the Albanian cause.[43]

The Albanian diaspora of the USA was the newest diaspora community that included the next generation of eminent Albanian nationalist figures. They set up associations, foremost of all the Pan-Albanian Federation of America (Vatra), with its publication *The Adriatic Review*, and published Albanian newspapers, such as *Kombi* (The Nation] and the still existing *Dielli* ([The Sun). The most outstanding figures of this diaspora community were the founder of *Kombi*, Faik Konitza (Konica in Albanian, who studied literature at the University of Dijon, the Collège de France and Harvard University) (1875–1942), Fan Noli (with studies at the University of Athens, Harvard University and Boston University), who was the first Head of the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and a short-lived prime minister in independent Albania in the 1920s, Konstandin Çekrezi (a Harvard graduate) and Kristo Dako (a graduate of mathematics from the University of Bucharest) as well as Sotir Peci.[44]

One of the main problems in instilling a sense of Albanian national identity was the lack of Albanian schools that were prohibited by the Ottoman state for its own reasons (so as not to allow a sense of Albanian identity to flourish, see Chapter 5). After years of negotiations with the Ottomans an Albanian-language school for boys (initially mixed) was opened in March 1887 in Korca, followed four years later, in 1901 with a school for girls.[45] And an illegal school was opened in Prizren in 1889.[46] Thus at the turn of the

century there were only three Albanian schools in geographical Albania and hundreds of Greek and Ottoman Turkish schools, with the great majority Greek schools.[47] In 1902 and until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the situation worsened dramatically, when new laws made books in Albanian and even correspondence in Albanian a punishable offence; and the three Albanian schools were shut down, with the Albanians reacting by teaching Albanian secretly which not only the Ottoman state but also the Greek ecclesiastical authorities (the Patriarchate) suppressed.[48]

The great majority of Albanians (that is the tiny literate minority) continued to go to Greek schools, most of which were of a high quality, with excellent teachers, or in Ottoman Turkish schools. Ottoman policy called on the Muslim Albanians to attend Ottoman Turkish language schools, and the Orthodox Albanians to go to the Greek schools, something strongly encouraged by the Patriarchate.[49] The Greek schools (Greek-funded by official Greece, the Patriarchate or Greek associations in Athens and Constantinople) in the vilayet of Janina in particular were considerable, the obvious aim being to eventually attach the region to the Greek state. According to one estimate the Greek language primary and secondary schools were 663 and the state (Ottoman Turkish) schools were only 135.[50]

In quest of an alphabet and literary language

Two of the great challenges faced by the Albanians were the lack of an Albanian alphabet and the lack of a generally accepted literary language. Until the early twentieth century the Albanians with their two main dialects, Gheg and Tosk, did not have a generally accepted literary language. Aside from the famous quip that 'a language is a dialect with an army and navy', which implies the arbitrariness of the distinction between dialects and language and the need to avoid essentialising them, modern sociolinguistics have abandoned the distinction between language and dialect and now speak in terms of 'non-standardized language variety' and 'standardized/normalized variety'.

Be this as it may in sociolinguistics, it is a fact that a people with no 'standardized/normalized' literary language, face a major problem of group identity and cohesion, while the establishment of such a language is a strong impetus to the formation and ingroup acceptance of a nation. In the Albanian case with its four vilayets, almost no roads, many talented people away in the diaspora or elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, with the three religions and two distinct dialects (and several sub-dialects) and with all these obstacles well into the first decade of the twentieth century, all these factors made language central and the main expression of Albanianism, with the importance of language attaining almost mythical proportions as the main unifier. As Piro Misha has put it[51]:

> Under such conditions the most reliable unifying element for a people which otherwise suffered from a number of dangerously centrifugal

> forces was language. This is why the language question and that of education in the Albanian language became the basic demand of Albanian nationalism....

Albanian has no close affiliation to other languages and like Greek it is not part of a wider family of languages and unlike the Latin, Germanic, Slavic or Turkic languages, it is a branch of its own like Greek.[52] But like Greek, Armenian and in all probability the ancient Illyrian it is an Indo-European language and not completely on its own with no language relationship to any language, as in the case of the Basque language. Curiously enough Albanian, despite a number of borrowings from other Balkan languages, is markedly different which may be due to its relative isolation in the Middle Ages and until the Ottoman conquest which had led many to emigrate to the southern tip of the Balkans and in southern Italy. The Albanian intellectuals and activists debated which alphabet to adopt and which dialect or mixture of dialects to opt for. The alphabet was finally decided to be the Latin alphabet, after discussions which lasted for almost three-quarters of a century.

As for which dialect to adopt as the standardised language, this proved even more slippery. Initially the dialect of Elbasan was decided for it contains elements of both Tosk and Gheg, but a mixing of dialects is difficult to achieve and a difficult process.

On the alphabet issue, the Albanians had before them various options, all of which had been in use in Albanian literature (prose and poetry), in scholarly works, in documents, in the press and in everyday correspondence: the Latin, Greek and Arabic alphabet were the main alternatives, with a small minority toying with the Cyrillic alphabet. Two other possibilities also existed and were discussed but at the end discarded: a unique Albanian alphabet, as had been proposed by Veqilharxhi in the 1840s and by others before or after him; and a combination of alphabets, with some letters from the Latin alphabet and some letters from the Greek alphabets, with the addition of diphthongs and perhaps the addition of few unique Albanian letters or Latin letters with diacritics as in Croatian, Polish, German and in the Scandinavian languages.

The educated Albanian speakers wrote in the Albanian language as early as the fifteenth century, to be exact in one of the Albanian dialects, by using Latin or Greek letters; the former tended to be known as the 'Catholic alphabet' and the latter as the 'Arvanite alphabet'. North of the Shkumbin River, most Ghegs wrote in the Latin alphabet and south of the river, most Tosks in the Greek alphabet.[53] From the late sixteenth century to the late eighteenth century, a number of writers wrote worthwhile literary or scholarly works, whose works were printed, such as Nazim Frakoula, Mehmet Chami, Gjon Buzuku, Lekë Matrenga, Pjetër Budi, Frang Bardhi, Pjetër Bogdani and Kosta Tzehani.[54]

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the then 21-year-old Marko Botzari, the future legendary Suliot warrior in the Greek Revolution (see Chapter 3), while in exile in Corfu, wrote a Greek-Albanian dictionary (upon

the request of Pouqueville) with Greek letters and some letters of his own and included a Greek-Albanian dialogue and how to learn Albanian. He titled it *Lexicon tis Romaikis kai tis Arvanitikis Aplis* (Dictionary of Roman and Simple Arvanite), though it is doubtful whether he was the sole or main author, given his youthful age and the fact that he was semi-literate.[55]

Reverting to the idea of a totally new alphabet, the best known was the *Vithkuqi* by Veqilharxhi. This was used for a while by a handful of Albanian writers. Prior to that, in the eighteenth century a new alphabet had been proposed by Teodor Haxhifilipi (Dhaskal Todri) comprised of 53 or 57 letters, showing Slavic, Greek and Latin influences.[56] During the same period, another alphabet appeared called the 'Alphabet of the Anonymous of Elbasan'. And in 1824 the four Gospels were printed in Corfu in the original Greek with an Albanian translation with 24 Greek letters and nine special ones. The translation was done under the supervision of Grigor Argjirokastriti from Girokaster, an Albanian bishop in the island of Euvoia, which was well received by the Tosk population, with a second edition in Athens in 1885.[57]

In the late 1870s, another attempt (the last one) at a unique Albanian alphabet was proposed by Hoca Hasan Tahsin (Hoxha Hasan Tahsin, in Albanian), the first rector of the Imperial University of Istanbul. The aim of those supportive of a distinct Albanian alphabet was to have letters that would be more able to express Albanian phonetics and would be free of foreign influences. But this idea though seriously discussed did not gain approval for not only was its learning more demanding but it was impractical, being far more expensive in its printing (due to having to devise printing with such unique letters).[58]

The first attempts to write in the Albanian language were undertaken by the protestant mission of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the aim being to render the Holy Scriptures accessible to the common people. The Bible Society contacted a number of learned Albanians for them to translate the Gospel into the vernacular. The end result was a translation in Albanian, with Greek letters, which was completed towards the end of the 1820s.[59]

Further attempts were made later by the Bible Society, in which two individuals were instrumental, both of them representing the Bible Society, who were in contact with each other, Koulouriotis in Greece and Kristoforidhi in the Ottoman Empire (both of them Orthodox who turned into Protestants). Kristoforidhi translated the Bible and other texts in the Tosk dialect using Greek letters and in the Gheg dialect using Latin letters (in this he used the approach of the pioneering German linguist Richard Lepsius). He befriended von Hahn and helped him learn Albanian and write a German-Albanian dictionary, and he wrote a textbook on the Albanian alphabet and a dictionary of the Albanian language. Kristoforidhi together with Pykaios were among the first to adopt the Pelasgian theory and was of the view that present-day Albania corresponded to Illyria and Epirus in antiquity.[60]

Kristoforidhi is also noteworthy for having made the following apt plea: 'If the Albanian language is not written, in a short time there will be no Albania, on the surface of the earth nor will the name Shqiptar [Albanian] appear in the map of the world'.[61]

Worth remembering is that in the Ottoman Empire written Albanian had been banned and Albanian schools had been prohibited (see Chapter 5) and the Patriarchate of Constantinople concurred with this policy, anathematising 'the use of Albanian letters and those who taught them, for any departure from Greek was held to be instigated by "the enemy of the faith"'.[62] Equally, the Foreign and British Bible Society and the American missions that had been instrumental in translating the holy books into Albanian language were regarded as 'the enemy of the faith'.[63]

However in the late 1860s, when the Ottoman Empire was in the throes of the Tanzimat reforms, the Ministry of Education decided that a commission be established to recommend an alphabet for Albanian, in view of 'there being no special writing for Albanian as yet'.[64] A committee approved by the reformist Grand Vizier Ali Pasha was set up to deal with the matter and arrive at a proposal for an Albanian alphabet. The committee was comprised of distinguished Albanian intellectuals and other personalities, most of them former members of the 'Albanian Society of Science' and members of 'The Society for Printing Albanian Letters' which stood for the principle that 'all enlightened nations have been…civilized by writings in their own language'.[65]

The committee members were Konstantin Kristoforidhi, Jani Vreto, Ismail Kemal [Qemali in Albanian] Bey Vlora, Pashko Vasa, Hasan Tahsin, Mustafa Pasha Pojani, Suleiman Pasha, Rustem Pasha Leskoviku, Said Bey Toptani, the banker Christakis Zographos and Sami Bey Frashëri (who participated in the last meetings). From 1869 until 1870 in Istanbul, the committee members discussed which alphabet to adopt for Albanian. The committee, with the Muslims in the majority, agreed to put aside the idea of a distinct Albanian alphabet (which had been Tahsin's initial preference) and concentrate their efforts on four options: Arabic, Latin, Greek and a mixed alphabet, one of the main task being to arrive at an alphabet best suited to the Albanian phonetics.[66]

In the beginning, the Muslim Albanians in the committee opted for the Arabic alphabet, but they abandoned the idea, when two Muslim Albanians, Ismail Kemal and Hasan Tahsin, pointed out that the Arabic alphabet was not suited to the Albanian phonetics and was very difficult to learn. Thus the committee members focused their attention on three possibilities: Greek, Latin or mixed alphabet (with both Greek and Latin letters). Vasa who was a Catholic from Shkoder supported Latin with the argument that it was the alphabet used by most of the civilised European peoples. Vreto and Kristoforidhi were for the adoption of Greek, stressing the links with the Greeks, that Greek civilisation existed before the Latin European civilisation, with Vreto also making the point that the Greeks like the Albanians were both descendants of the

Pelasgians and he claimed that Greek is closer to Albanian than the Latin languages. The final proposal of the committee (January 1870) was for a mainly Latin alphabet with the addition of some Greek letters, but the proposal was not sanctioned. There followed an attempt by Tahsin to arrive at an alphabet that resembled the Georgian one and an alphabet by Sami Frashëri that was mainly Latin, known as the 'Stamboul alphabet' (see below).[67]

The Ottoman authorities were of the view that if the Latin or Greek alphabet was adopted and not the Arabic one they would lose the Albanians, thus they did their utmost to propagate Arabic (going as far as to claim that not writing right to left and not in Arabic was a sin in Islam) with their second choice being a new alphabet. And this stance continued under the Young Turk leaders in 1908–1910 bent on centralising the empire, at a time when Latin had prevailed among the Albanian intellectuals. Many Albanian Muslim leaders apart from the Bektashis did not regard a Latin alphabet as jeopardising their Islamic faith, and they come out in support of such an alphabet.[68]

The Greek alphabet despite its prestige in the Balkans was abandoned for three reasons. One was in order to emancipate the Christian Tosks from the Greeks and their influence. A second reason was that the 24-letter Greek alphabet is too limited and cannot express the Albanian phonetics and sounds (and this is indeed the case) and many diphthongs would have to be added. And last but not least was the blunt Greek coveting of southern Albania which could hardly ingratiated the Greeks to the Albanians, including the Tosks in the south who were appalled by the Greek intrusions (see Chapter 9).[69] Thus Latin gained ground which had the asset of emphasising the Albanians European identity, could contribute to greater links with the West and distance Albania from the Ottoman Empire which was increasingly seen as backward and anti-European.[70]

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the 'Stamboul alphabet' of Sami Frashëri (or 'Frashëriot Alphabet'). Frashëri had taken into consideration the linguistic theory of Lepsius regarding alphabets (his friend Kristoforidhi had acquainted him with this approach). This alphabet was accepted by his brother Abdyl, as well as by Vasa, Tahsin, Vreto, and Koto Hoxhi, all of them active in the 'Society for the Printing of Albanian Writing'.[71] Greek is obviously deficient when it comes to, say, 'b' and 'g' which are non-existent and moreover Greek is equipped with two superfluous letters that are two letters (sounds) each ψ (ps) and ξ (ks). Where the Albanian sounds and phonetics could not be produced not even in Latin, Greek words were introduced, such as δ and θ and more rarely Cyrillic letters, with the Stamboul alphabet having 36 letters, with no diphthongs, on the basis of the principle 'one symbol one sound'.[72]

Kristoforidhi before he died, in 1895, left in manuscript form an Albanian-Greek dictionary, written in Greek letters.[73] The Greek Government got wind of it and in 1904 published it under the title *Leksikon tis alvanikis glossas* (Dictionary of the Albanian language). In its forward written by the

Greek authorities one reads the following propaganda: '"it [the dictionary] is delivered... as a valuable educational tool to teach the brave Albanian people, through practical example, that only with the help, leadership, and inspiration of the Greek letters and the Greek language" they would be enlightened'.[74] However, the manuscript in question had a previous history which goes back to 1867 when Kristoforidhi published a booklet titled *Alfavitar Shqip* [Albanian alphabet] with Greek letters, which was further developed in a new edition published in 1872.[75]

In 1895 and again in 1897, two Albanian linguistic congresses were held in Italy, aimed at a unified alphabet. Meanwhile the two most famous poets among the Italo-Albanians, Girolamo de Rada and Giuseppe Schiro devised, separately, an alphabet founded on Latin letters and used it in their publications. But apparently at the time, only the Catholics of Shkoder showed an interest in these activities across the Adriatic, with the Muslims and the Orthodox Christians indifferent.[76]

At the turn of the century, there were two other proposals, again with Latin as the basis, but in both cases without the addition of Greek or Cyrillic letters. One was by Prenk Doçi, a Catholic priest, in 1899, known as the Bashkimi (unity), with only Latin letters; and when they could not produce Albanian sounds-phonetics, seven diphthongs, as follows, all of them with h one of the two letters: ch, dh, gh, sh, th, xh ή zh.[77] An alphabet similar to the Bashkimi was concocted by Fail Konitza in his review *Albania*, published in Brussels and later in London.[78]

The second alphabet, again by a Catholic, the Jesuit priest Ndre Mjeda from Shkoder, was known as Agimi (dawn) which followed the principle of the Stamboul alphabet, that is one symbol one sound, and in the Albanian sounds that cannot be expressed by Latin letters, symbols with diacritics, such as đ, č or š, the model being the Croatian alphabet and ideas from Lepsius's system.[79]

In 1908, with the Young Turk Revolution, the Ottoman state lifted its ban regarding Albanian schools and writing in Albanian. Thus in the very same year, Mid'hat Frashëri, the son of Abdyl Frashëri, convened a conference in Monastir (Bitola) in November 1908 to decide on the pending question of the Albanian alphabet.[80]

In what came to be known as the Conference on the Alphabet, some 200 representatives set up an 11 person committee, consisting of the most educated members among the Albanians (although two outstanding figures were missing, Konitza and Noli). The 11 were 5 Muslims Albanians, Mid'hat Frashëri, Shahin Kolonja, Bajram Topulli and Nyzhet Bej Vrioni, 3 Orthodox Albanians, Sotir Peçi, Gjergj Qiriazi and Gligor Cilka (the last two had meanwhile become Protestants) and 3 Catholic Albanians, Gjergj Fishta, Ndre Mjeda and Luigj Gurakuqi. The 11 person committee decided that three alphabets were worth examining: Stamboul, Bashkim and Agimi and their task was to ascertain which of the three alphabets was most suitable. After the

first round of talks they abandoned *Agimi* and concentrated their efforts on a thorough examination of the other two. The 11 experts were divided into two groups, all the Muslims and one Catholic supported the *Stamboul* alphabet (Frashëri, Kolonja, Topulli, Vrioni and Mjeda), while the three Orthodox (Protestants) and two Catholics (Peçi, Qiriazi, Cilka, Fishta and Gurakuqi) came in support of the *Bashkim* alphabet. The end result, given the roughly equal number on either side, was conciliatory, to accept both alphabets for the time being, as had been the case with the German alphabet (that was both Latin and Gothic, as pointed out by Fishta), but in the future to make various changes, striving to bring the two alphabets closer to each other.[81]

The Young Turks did their utmost to dissuade the Albanians from opting for the Latin alphabet which they regarded as a first step at detachment from the empire, but to no avail (though they managed to rally the support of several conservative Muslim Albanians at a conference in Skopje in February 1910).[82]

From then on until the end of the First World War Bashkimi was to win the day. In 1912 when Albania declared its independence (28 November 1912), it abolished the Arabic alphabet. As for the Stamboul alphabet it gradually receded for two reasons: First, it was handier, as Pater Fishta said in the Monastir (Bitola) Congress to have publications printed in the Latin script. Second, during the period of Greek occupation of southern Albania, the Moslems had been persecuted thus 'anything Greek was apt to be considered inimical', and even the few Greek letters of the Stamboul alphabet 'were bound to be resented'.[83]

The end result was the adoption of 36 letters, with only two Latin letters with diacritics, ç and ë, with the addition of nine diphthongs which are regarded as letters, as is the case of the Hungarian alphabet and several Slavic alphabets. The diphthongs are as follows: dh, gj, ll, nj, rr, sh, th, xh and zh.[84]

As to the other major issue, the standardised language, two alternatives were entertained: (a) a mixed language with elements from both dialects, Gheg and Tosk, in which case the mixed language-dialect spoken in Elbasan seemed the appropriate model, which though basically Gheg has many Tosk elements; and (b) not a mixed language along the one of Elbasan or some other, for as pointed out correctly by the distinguished Albanian philologer and educationalist, Aleksandër Xhuvani (who actually hailed from Elbasan), it is almost impossible to construct a national language from two distinct dialects, and he regarded the Tosk dialects more appropriate for a number of linguistic reasons (even though he used the Elbasan dialect in many of his works).[85]

In 1909, one year after the Alphabet conference, a smaller conference on language was convened, which decided that the spoken language of Elbasan would form the basis of publishing and teaching. This decision was confirmed on several occasions, in 1917, in 1920 and again in 1923.

However, there were many objections in the course of the interwar period, with authors in the north writing in the Gheg dialect and those in the south in the Tosk dialect. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was decided that Tosk would be

the basis, but that Gheg could be used in poetry and exceptionally in prose.[86] In 1967, the rules of Albanian orthography were finalised. The discussion on language continued culminating in the convening for five days, in 1972, of the Albanian Language Spelling Congress. The participants at the Congress, which was attended by Enver Hoxha, were linguists and other academics from Albanian universities and institutes, and also Albanian scholars from Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Arberesh from Italy, as well as poets and novelists, and in the end it was decided that, for practical reasons, the unified Albanian language should have most elements derived from the Tosk dialect.[87]

The advent of Albanian nationalism (1878–1912)

Historically, Albanian nationalism was at its peak on two occasions within three decades, in both instances as a result a major foreign threat.[88] The first was in 1878 against the incorporation of Albanian-inhabited regions initially to three Slavic Balkan states, and a little later to Greece, The second threat of 1912 was far worse, it was a very real threat of imminent total dismemberment by four neighbouring states.

As put by Stavrianos, 'the Albanians at home remained asleep', as distinct from the Albanians in Italy who pioneered in 'Albanian nationalist literature' and tried 'to stimulate national consciousness and pride'.[89] They were for the first time 'awakened by a shock from the outside', namely the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878) that gave extensive lands inhabited by Albanians to Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria.[90] Serbia was given a large part of the sanjak of Pristina, Montenegro was allotted the north Albanian regions of Pec, Ulqin, Hoti, Plava, Gucia and Podgorica, with an autonomous greater Bulgaria receiving a large chunk of western Albania, including Korca, Dibra and Tetovo.[91]

It was then that as Skendi has put it '[t]he movements of the Albanians, which until then had been primarily against the taxes, the draft, and the centralistic policy in general that the Turkish Government was attempting to impose, took another turn – they began to be nationalistic'.[92]

The first act was the formation in Istanbul (in December 1877 or January 1878) in earnest and in secret (so as to avoid pressure from the Porte) of 'The Central Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian People', known as Committee of Istanbul, composed of prominent Albanian leaders, intellectuals and employees in the Ottoman administration, both Moslems and Christians. Its main figure who was elected its president was the Bektashi intellectual Abdyl (or Abdul) Bey Frashëri, a southern Albanian Tosk, who at the time was director of finance at the vilayet of Janina and had been elected as a deputy in the first Ottoman Parliament.[93] The members of the Central Committee included Abdyl Frashëri's younger brothers, Naim Bey Frashëri and Sami Bey Frashëri, Jani Vreto, Pashko Vasa, Mehmet Ali Vrioni, Zija Prishtina, Koto Hoxhi, Mihal Harito, Abedin Dino, Ymer Prizreni and a few others.[94]

On 10 June 1878, a historic meeting was convened in Prizren (in Kosovo) 'with the clear intention to present before the European Powers the refusal of the Albanians to accept territorial concessions to Montenegro and Serbia'.[95] More than 300 delegates participated, mostly landowners (beys), Muslim clergymen, chieftains and some intellectuals, mainly from Kosovo and western Macedonia, with only two delegates from the south, owing to lack of time in summoning them. In the Prizren Meeting it was decided to set up an organisation for the defence of the rights of the Albanian people with a central committee at Prizren, named 'Albanian League for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nation', better known as League of Prizren or Albanian League. Committees were to be established in various parts of the Albanian-inhabited regions which would be linked with the headquarters in Prizren, and controlled by it. The committees were entrusted to enrol people, buy food, and distribute arms and ammunition to the Albanians, with all able men, except those with one per family, were to be armed.[96]

Among the prominent participants of the Prizren meeting were Abdyl Bey Frashëri (one of the two delegates from the south), Ilyaz Pasa of Dibra, the hereditary chief of the Catholic Mirdita, Prenh Bid Doba, Hodo Pasha of Shkoder, Ali Pasha of Gusinje, Sulejman Vokshi and Ymer Prizreni.[97] Abdyl Frashëri 'was destined to play the most important role in the whole movement'.[98] Key figures who soon joined the League included his two younger brothers, Sami and Naim Frashëri, Pashko Vasa, Mehmet Ali Bey Vrioni, Jani Vreto and others. Abdyl Frashëri prior to and after the conference made sure to gain the support of various Bektashi *tekkes*, who could wield their influence among the southern notables and he did this with the help of one of their main Bektashi religious leaders, Baba Alush of Frashër.[99]

In the Prizren meeting, Abdyl Frashëri, the leading figure (though refusing any official position),[100] proposed the adoption of a protest to be sent to the Porte and to the Congress of Berlin (then in session) against the partition of Albania.[101] Thus on 18 June the so-called Kararname resolutions were adopted by 47 Albanians beys, which included[102]

> a refusal to give up any territory to Serbia, Montenegro, or Greece; a demand for the return of all Albanian-speaking land annexed by Serbia and Montenegro; Albanian autonomy within the Empire; and no more conscription for, and taxation by, the central government in Constantinople.

Lesser known was another initiative, almost parallel to the Prizren meeting, the formation of a committee in Shkoder, which included delegates that participated in the Prizren meeting.[103] It what comprised of Muslim and Catholic Ghegs and from the outset it assumed a more nationalist line, its main concern being not to have the territories of northern Albania ceded to

Serbia and Montenegro (as provided in the Treaty of San Stefano). On 18 June 1878, at the opening of the Berlin Conference, the Shkoder committee sent a memorandum addressed to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (now Lord Beaconsfield), in view of his stance against the Slavic advances in the Balkans. The memorandum defined the land of the Albanians as being from 'the banks of the Boyana to the gate of Janina, where the Albanians are 'homogeneous and compact'.[104] And the memorandum in question added an interesting caveat: that from Janina to the Amvrakikos Gulf 'the Greek element with religious and lay propaganda contends the ground with the Albanian race which is maintained there preponderant, if not in number, certainly in vigor and attitude to resistance'.[105]

The Shkoder memorandum contained no negative statement regarding or accusing regarding Greece, for until then the Greek claim to Epirus had not been officially presented.[106] It further specified that '[a]s we are not and do not want to be Turks, so we shall oppose with all our might anyone who would like to turn us into Slavs or Austrians or Greeks, we want to be Albanians'.[107] And added[108]

> 'We want to be Albanians … Albania will never stand the Slavic domination whether it comes from the frontiers of Bulgaria, or those of Montenegro; Albania will never be Turkish, and the proof is more than four centuries of struggles in order to preserve intact the character, traditions, and national aspect'.

Two days later, on 20 June 1878, ten members of the Central Committee of Istanbul, send from the Ottoman capital another memorandum addressed to Bismarck, Andrassy (the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister) and Lord Beaconsfield 'expressing the desire that Albania enjoy autonomy within the framework of the Ottoman empire and protesting against any intention to put her under the rule of any other country'.[109]

Reverting to the Albanian League it articulated its aims as follows: (1) to 'resist until death' any attempt by any state to annex Albanian territory; (2) to obtain an autonomous status within the Ottoman Empire, with the union of all territory inhabited by Albanians in one province governed from Monastir by a Turkish Governor-General and council of ten, who were to be advised by an Albanian Committee elected by universal suffrage; (3) to ensure that Albanian should be the administrative language; and (4) to raise a national militia under officers of the Turkish army.[110]

The Ottoman authorities initially encouraged the League in the hope that it would foil the expansion of the three Slav Balkan states.[111] The League was unable to secure the Albanian lands assigned to Serbia for the Serbian Army already controlled them, but they were able to repulse the Montenegrins when they tried to secure Podgorica and the other cities and towns allotted to them by the San Stefano Treaty.[112]

Abdyl Frashëri and Jani Vreto left for Berlin, where the Congress of Berlin was in session (13 June to 13 July 1878) under the chairmanship of Bismarck. In Berlin however Frashëri and Vreto were unable to address the Congress nor were they able to meet anyone of importance.[113] At the Congress Bismarck had commented tersely that there is no such thing as an Albanian nationality and Albania is merely a geographical expression.[114] The two Albanian leaders managed to hand a memorandum to the leaders of the great powers assembled in Berlin, where they stated among others that 'from the time of the independence of Greece', Hellenism had tried to find various means to conquer Epirus, but on their part 'there was no desire for union with Greece or for departing from the Sultan's sovereignty', and the memorandum stressed the firm decision of the Albanians not to succumb to Greek sovereignty.[115]

Despite the fact that the two-person delegation made no tangible headway in the Berlin Congress, with the benefit of hindsight one can say that 'the Congress of Berlin saw the arrival of the Albanian Question onto the European diplomatic stage',[116] though hardly as a matter of urgency.

In Berlin, a fourth threat appeared to the Albanians, Greece, which was keen to acquire about half of the vilayet of Janina (up to the Kalamas River) which of course included Janina, along with Thessaly to the east. A formal request was made at the Berlin Congress by Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Deliyannis, calling for the Greek annexation of Crete, Thessaly and Epirus. Britain was opposed especially to the inclusion of Janina, but the French and Italian representatives were forthcoming as regards not only Thessaly but most of the vilayet of Janina. But the final decision of the Berlin Congress was vague, calling upon 'the Sublime Porte and Greece' to 'reach an agreement on the rectification of the frontier' and if the negotiations failed for the great powers to intervene and mediate.[117]

The Ottomans resisted as best they could the Greek demands and used the Albanian League to foil them. The League's Albanians leaders needed little prompting, for they were fully aware of the Greek *Megali Idea* and its designs regarding southern Albania (or a dual Greek-Albanian monarchy under Greek aegis, as proposed at the time to the Albanians, see Chapter 8).[118] They believed that the annexation of the vilayet of Janina to Greece would be disastrous, eventually leading to 'their annihilation, and declared that they were prepared to fight rather than be handed over to Greece'.[119] Thus, a committee was set up in haste, comprised of Abdyl Frashëri as chairman and Vesel Dino representing Chameria to do everything in its power not to allow Greece to take over the vilayet. The committee also envisaged, if need be, an Albanian uprising and even toyed with the idea of declaring independence.[120]

The Ottoman representative General Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, met Abdyl Frashëri and other prominent Albanian League members to prepare them for armed resistance against any Greek attempt annexation, reassuring them that the most that the Ottoman state could concede would be a small portion in

the south, the city of Arta. And indeed Arta was the region ceded to Greece in 1881, with Ottoman-Greek negotiations dragging on for almost two years, though the whole of Thessaly was ceded to Greece, where the great majority were Greeks and Hellenised Vlachs.[121]

As to the main activity of the League of Prizren, its leaders were in full agreement as to defending Albanian territorial integrity at all costs but they were sharply divided on the issue of autonomy, with a small minority (the 'radicals' under Abdyl Frashëri), wanting to unilaterally go ahead with autonomy and a majority (the 'moderates'), who were conservative Muslim landowners against it.[122] In general, the demand put forward to the Porte 'varied and were not of the same tenor', the traditional elites of the northern parts of the Albanian territories were 'for the preservation of their local privileges, while the more nationally minded Albanian intellectuals' from the of the vilayet of Janina 'gave a more "national" connotation to the memoranda, but still holding to the attainment of an autonomous status for their territories inside the Empire, deemed as a shelter from the expansionism of the Balkan countries'.[123]

In 1879, Abdyl Frashëri and Mehmed Ali Vrioni travelled to Berlin, Paris, Vienna and Rome to propagate the Albanian cause and gain international support.[124] They were able to have an audience with British Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury (12 May 1879) and among other things they told him that 'of the 650,000 population of Epirus, only about 74,000 spoke Greek as well as Albanian, and these consisted chiefly of men, the women speaking almost exclusively Albanian'.[125]

Earlier in 1879, in January, the League presented to the Porte its autonomy project which amounted to the following: unification of the four vilayets into one Albanian province (vilayet), setting up of a national assembly elected by universal suffrage, the governor of the new united province would be an Ottoman Turk but he would be advised by the Albanian assembly, there would be an Albanian militia under Ottoman Turkish officers, Albanian would be taught in schools and the language of the administration was to be Albanian.[126]

The Ottoman who had previously favoured the League's existence and aims, could not accept these demands for fear that it would be a prelude to eventual independence.[127] Note that it 'was the first time that the Ottoman Empire had encountered nationalism among Muslims', thus Sultan Abdulhamid 'was advised to crush the League as soon as possible'.[128] The Albanians for their part tried to force the issue by ousting Ottoman officials and taking over control. The Porte reacted by arresting the members of the League and sending them into exile in Rhodes. Abdyl Frashëri was arrested and sentenced to death but this was commuted to life imprisonment (he was given amnesty in 1885 and died in 1894). And the Ottoman Army was sent to subdue and disperse the League forces and made sure to reassert Ottoman authority throughout the Albanian-inhabited territories (March–May 1881).[129]

The life span of the League may have been short, barely four years, yet its real importance lay elsewhere: that it represented the beginning of the Albanian national movement that was bound to burgeon and not disappear as the Ottomans had hoped; and it was the first time that it was declared unequivocally and publicly by the Albanian elite that an Albanian nation did exist, and this had to henceforth be taken into account by the European great powers of the day.[130] And as an indication of this, Swire and Stavrianos refer to a dispatch by Ambassador George Goschen, the British envoy in Istanbul (dated 26 July 1880), in which he expressed his opinion to Foreign Secretary Earl Granville[131]:

> Whatever the history of the movement may be … the Albanian excitement cannot be passed over as a mere manoeuvre conducted by the Turks in order to mislead Europe and evade its will. Nor can it be denied that the Albanian movement is perfectly natural … It is one which is the natural outcome of the general movement in the Balkan Peninsula. Analogous considerations lead me to the conclusion … that the Albanian nationality is an element which ought not to be overlooked in any future political combinations…

The League 'may have been crushed, but its ideals continued to exercise a powerful influence on Albanian intellectuals for several decades'.[132] As Charles and Barbara Jelavich point out, the previous three years of the Albanian League 'had produced significant achievements for the national movement' and they highlight three of them[133]:

> First, many Albanian leaders had come to recognize that the Ottoman Empire was near collapse and that they had to plan for the future. Second, the initial steps had been taken to affect a common policy in both the north and the south, areas that hitherto had not been in communication. Third, and most important, the spirit and basic program of the Albanian League had been accepted by the various factions who now differed chiefly on how the common aims should be achieved. The first concrete moves towards the creation of an Albanian state had thus been taken.

Tajar Zavalani goes even further. He is of the view that the League's[134]

> action contributed substantially to the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the country, it brought the existence of the Albanian nation to the attention of the Great Powers, it produced for the first time united Albanian action, and brought to the forefront leaders capable of assessing the national condition, articulating Albanian aspirations and relating these to contemporary European developments.

However, according to Artan Puto[135]:

> The activities of the League should not be taken as an exemplary expression of Albanian nationalism, in the sense of a well-coordinated "national" movement involving large parts of the populations. Most of the actors were pushed or involved in it by different interests, going from national projects of a single autonomous Albanian vilayet [province], to the preservation of local privileges and Islamic solidarity and loyalty to the Sultan/Caliph. It was also an expression of the resentment towards the Sublime Porte, which due to its weakness submitted to the pressure of the European Powers and increasingly placed the Albanian lands under the threat of Orthodox Balkan rule.

Following the forced dissolution of the League, the Albanians put their priority on cultural and educational matters.[136] Previously when the League was in place, the 'Society for the Development of the Albanian Language' that had been set up in 1879 and was very active in the next decades, as regard the alphabet and publications in Albanian.[137] In 1906, a group of Albanian intellectuals and nationalists set up a secret revolutionary organisation in Monastir aimed at the liberation of Albania and it was mainly active in the Korca region.[138]

Historically the second threat to the Albanians was far more serious, dismemberment by its four aggressive neighbours, who were the winners of the First Balkan War. A little before, the Albanians had resorted to arms (in 1909–1911) in the mountainous regions of Albania and Kosovo as a result of the measure taken by the increasingly nationalist Young Turks.[139] Having been informed of the upcoming Balkan War, the uprising intensified in 1912, under Hasan Prishtina (who was close to Ismail Kemal and like him was a deputy in the second Ottoman Parliament), Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri and Bajram Daklani. In 1912 prior to the Balkan Wars the Albanians were in control of a large portion of Kosovo, with Boletini having taken over Skopje with 30,000 men.[140] They presented to the Ottomans the so-called 'Fourteen Points', also known as the 14 Points of Hasan Prishtina,[141] which amounted to a modest level of autonomy and whose points were by and large similar to the original demands made decades before, in 1879, by the Albanian League.[142]

The 14 points included the following: (1) the appointment of a Governor-General for the four vilayets; (2) the appointment of experienced native governors and officials; (3) Albanian soldiers to perform their military service, in time of peace, within the four vilayets only; (4) inauguration of a fresh judicial system which would respect local laws, traditions, and customs, with Albanians to be tried only before Albanian judges; (5) the local language therein (it is not clear whether Albanian was definitely specified or not) to be the official language and the medium of instruction in all state schools; (6) absolute liberty therein to establish private schools; (7) the establishment

therein of technical schools (teaching agriculture, science, etc.); (8) local revenues to be expended locally and roads and railways to be built. (9) houses destroyed by the troops during the recent disturbances to be rebuilt at the expense of the government; (10) recognition of the right of Albanians to bear arms and the restoration of those confiscated; (11) a general amnesty for all political offenders.[143]

The Porte under Grand Vizier Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, who headed a liberal Ottoman Government (following the 1912 Saviour Officer coup) that was opposed to the excesses of the nationalist Young Turks (centralisation cum Turkish nationalism) was prepared to accept the bulk of the demands (12 out of the 14 points).[144] The Ottoman state kept its word and at the end of August, under Grand Vizier Qamil Pasha, it granted virtual autonomy to Albania, but the First Balkan War, which started on 17 October, did not allow the autonomy to function properly and bear fruit.[145]

The Albanians felt they had no other realistic choice, given the designs against them of the four Balkan states, than to side with the Ottomans in the First Balkan War.[146] The irony is that the Ottomans blamed them for their defeat, as not having fought bravely enough.[147] With the Ottomans about to be driven out of most of the Balkans, the Albanian leadership under the astute liberal politician Ismail Kemal (one of the few left from the old guard) abandoned its traditional approach of autonomy, chose to quit 'the Ottoman ship before it sank under them'[148] and opted for independence (see end of Chapter 8).[149]

Notes

1 Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origins du nationalisme albanais: La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Éditions KARTHALA, 2007), 153.
2 *Ibid*., 154–5.
3 *Ibid*., 155.
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7 Albanian national identity and historical narrative

Albanian identity: Albanianism and religious indifference

The Albanians have no overriding religious faith nor have they decided like the Arabs that for all of them, including the Christian Arabs, Islam is an essential aspect of their culture, tradition and identity.[1] Thus they are left with no other realistic option than 'indifference to religion',[2] that religion as such plays no role whatsoever in Albanian national identity. In fact, this belief is mainly a myth or more accurately a necessary construction, which includes two essential correlates: religious tolerance cum religious pluralism; and the primacy of language as the marker *par excellence* of Albanian national identity.[3] Language become 'the most reliable remaining unifying element for a people which otherwise suffered from a number of dangerously centrifugal forces'.[4] It was language together with Pashko Vasa's construction of 'Albanianism', in his famous 1878 poem (see Chapter 5).[5]

As a construction the lack of resolute religious identity had been first adopted by the Italian-Albanians, such as Camarda (see Chapter 6) and a century later reached its most extreme position with Enver Hoxha's abolition of religion. However, in the course of the nineteenth century, religion, be it Islam or Christianity, was hardly inconsequential and was one of the reasons that Albanian nationalism took so long to arrive at a stage of maturity (see Chapter 5), as pointed out by none than Vasa Pashko in his famous poem (see Chapter 5).[6] The construction of indifference to religion, lack of religious fanaticism, religious tolerance and pluralism was made easier due to the overall tolerance and respect of other religions advocated by Bektashism as expressed by Naim Frashëri's Bektashi writings.[7] Naim Frashëri asserted in his *Fletore e Bektashınjet* (Bektashi Notebook) that[8]:

> The Bektashis are brothers not only among themselves but with all humanity … They love the rest of the Moslems and the Christians as their soul and they get along well with all men. But above all they love their fatherland and their countrymen, this being the highest of all virtues.

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The Bektashi's 'heart is full of kindness and his soul full of sweetness … Brotherhood, pacifism, love, kindness, gratitude, friendship … are the lights' that lead him and as such he is well-placed to guide the Albanian nation.[9]

Sami Frashëri argued that[10]

> religious division didn't bring any split among Albanians … In Albania there never occurred a religious struggle between Moslems and Christians, or between Catholics and Orthodox, or between Sunnis and Bektashis. An Albanian is an Albanian before being Moslem or Christian … Religion did not change him as he puts nationality before religion.

Konstandin Çekrezi, wrote in 1919: 'The truth is that the Albanian is not fanatical; On the contrary, it may be said, that, au finds [sic], he is indifferent in religious matters'.[11] And he attributed this 'climate of religious tolerance to the special influence of Bektashism'.[12]

In post-communist Albania, religious tolerance and pluralism clearly exist and the non-intrusion of religion in politics, contrary to the case of Greece or Turkey, is an essential ingredient of Albanian national identity and statehood. Even the clerics of the different religions in Albania who obviously are attached to their religion emphasise religious tolerance and tend to regard their religion as the most tolerant one.[13] Religion still 'matters to Albanians, but the idea that it does not is an important part of their identity'.[14]

Albanian identity and narrative: the classical version

The main 'plot of the Albanian historiographical narrative is motivated by a desire to "prove" their national right to existence, and is, therefore, nation-centered'.[15] This is hardly surprising given the tendency of its main neighbours in the nineteenth century and even in the first part of the twentieth century to question the Albanians' existence as a nation or to doubt the Albanian nationhood of the Muslims (in the Ottoman case), or of the Orthodox Christian (in the Greek case).

Apart from Albanians and their religious indifference, another fundamental ingredient of the Albanian national narrative-myth was – and is – to stress their indigenous character in the western Balkans, of having lived there since time immemorial; as being among the earlier indigenous peoples, together with the ancient Greeks, or even before them as the first peoples of the Balkans, with their language, to be more precise the language of their ancestors, as the oldest in the Balkans.

This quest for 'origins and priority' in the Balkans, had led them to be initially strong advocates of the view of European Albanists, notably of von Hahn, that their ancestors are the Pelasgians (see Chapter 5), the earliest people of the southern Balkans[16] (note also that the ancient Athenians, contrary to the Spartans claimed that they had partly of Pelasgian origin).[17] The myth of the Pelasgian origin is seen in Pykaios's periodical *Pelasgos* published

in Greece, in 1860, as well as in the important publication of Pashko Vasa, titled *The Truth on Albania and the Albanians: Historical and Critical Issues* (1878).[18] The Pelasgian approach together with the Illyrian theory is to be found in the works and statements of Sami Frashëri, Faik Konitza, Fan Noli, Kostandin Çekrezi and Kristo Dako and others, so as to establish autochthony and priority in the Balkans.[19]

As put by Sami Frashëri[20]:

> Albanians are the oldest of all the nations in Europe. It seems that they came the first to enter Europe from the Middle Asia; they brought with them the knowledge how to build houses with walls and how to work the soil, to plant and to harvest; before them in Europe there were wild people living in forests and caves, eating fruits and hunting for meat.

Sami Frashëri is well known for his famous political treatise of 1899, titled *Albania: What She Has Been, What She Is, What She Shall Be* (translated also into Greek), which is regarded the manifesto of the Albanian *Rilindja*.[21] The book consists of three main parts: the first covers the history of the Albanian people, the second the actual situation of Albania under Ottoman rule and the third is a forecast of what the future may hold for Albania or, rather how Albania should be built and internally organised once it becomes an independent state. Sami Frashëri pointed to the distinct character of the Albanians as a nation entitled to a state of their own, with all the characteristics of a nation (an adequate number, brave, proud, intelligent, laborious, able to defend oneself, etc.), who happened to be descendants of the Pelasgians, an Indo-European people and he stressed the vital need for an alphabet and schools.[22]

From 1945 until today, the main tendency among the Albanians is to regard themselves as descendants of the Illyrians rather than of the Pelasgians,[23] which also happens to tally with one of the main scholarly theories on the Albanian origins (see Chapter 5).[24] And especially since 1945 Albanian archaeological exploration focuses on finding evidence that links the modern Albanians to the Illyrians.[25]

There is the firm belief that their origins are ancient and moreover that there is an unfettered continuity between then and now in the very same geographical region that the Albanians live today. According to Dako, the Albanians are 'the autochthonous inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula, which they have ruled for thousands of years before the barbarians ever crossed the Danube', the Albanian 'is the descendant of the original owners of the soil'.[26] The Pelasgian origins meant that they were there not only before the Slav 'barbarians' in the sixth century A.D., 'but also, even more importantly, before the Greeks'.[27] According to Noli in an article written in 1916: 'The Albanians are the only lawful owners of Albania. They have possessed that land from time immemorial, long before the Greeks and Slavs had arrived in the Balkan Peninsula'.[28]

Pashko asserted that 'Geographically, ethnologically and historically it is already proved that Epirus and Macedonia were never part of Greece'[29] and[30]

> that the Epirotes were different from the Greek people, that over the centuries they had their own language, the language of the Pellazgs (*sic*) that the Greeks could not understand at all, which for sure is the same language spoken today in the Epirus, in Macedonia, in Illyria, the same language that is called Arbëresh or Albanian.

But the Pelasgian theory and to some extent the Illyrian one, made them, as in the case of the Italian-Albanians, to venture into more controversial territory, claiming that some of the most emblematic figures of ancient Greek culture and history were wholly or partly Albanian, as wholly or partly Illyrians or Pelasgians. According to Dako, 'Philip and his son Alexander the Great as well as all the Macedonians were not Greeks but the forefathers of the Albanians'.[31] Çekrezi refers in passing to 'Alexander the Great, whose Illyrian-Albanian origin cannot be disputed'.[32] Pyrrhus is also included, again a construction first conceived by the Italo-Albanians.[33] The Albanian-Pelasgian infusion into Greek civilisation was also triggered by a comment by Herodotus that the Greeks had learned the names of their Gods from the Pelasgians, which made Malte-Brun, Crispi, Çekrezi, Dako and Pashko Vasa claim that many ancient Greek names had Albanian (Pelasgian) origins, such as Thetis, Deucalion, Mousai and even Zeus. Note that these derivations are mere myths, wholly rejected by modern scholarship.[34]

Associated closely with the myth of ancient origins and also linked with continuity is 'the myth of a pure, homogeneous ethnic identity', that 'they had always remained pure Albanians, untouched by any intrusion, admixture or dilution by foreign elements'.[35] As Noel Malcolm correctly points out[36],

> [a]lthough some of the other myths of Albanian identity may have contained an important element of historical truth, this is hardly defensible at all: modern scholars know that no Balkan population has remained in a watertight compartment, and that all have undergone ethnic interminglings of many different kinds,

which include in the Albanian case, 'Romans (themselves of different origins), Slavs (especially during the early middle ages, when Bulgarian Slav settlers penetrated much of Albania), Greeks and (in much smaller numbers) Turks' and this also applies to their language.[37] And undoubtedly[38]

> the gene-pool of the Albanians contains different elements, so too their language, culture and way of life reflects the many influences they have absorbed, such as the linguistic legacy of Latin and Slavic vocabulary and the strong cultural imprint of the Ottomans.

However the myth of cultural purity and ethnic homogeneity 'dictates otherwise'.[39] It is maintained in all seriousness even by Albanian intellectuals of calibre yesterday and to some extent even today. Konitza defines the Albanian race as[40]

> a group of men who, having lived together for many centuries, speaking the same language, having led a secluded life, constantly intermarried, and until now fought successfully large settlements of invaders, present certain unmistakable similarities in physical appearance and in temperament.

He goes even further claiming that the Albanians on the whole are 'a homogeneous racial group' and a population whose 'skull characteristics' are 'clear-cut'.[41] Dako claims that despite the conquests little change came about to the Albanians and that they 'remained a distinct and peculiar people'.[42] And in trying to impute a permanent 'national consciousness' and 'national pride to the *Ur*-Albanians and Albanians' he maintains that while 'the Macedonians, Epirotes and Illyrians intermarried among themselves, they never did so with the Greeks'.[43]

Çekrezi notes that in Albania's long history it had been invaded several times by 'various civilized, half-civilized, and barbarian races'.[44] As he put it[45]:

> The Gauls, the Romans, the Goths, the Slavs, the Normans, the Venetians, and, finally, the Turks, successively set their foot on, and obtained temporary mastery over, the Albanian territory. But, in the course of time, the natives have gradually driven out or assimilated the invaders. So many invasions and influences have left hardly any appreciable traces, least of all on the national characteristics, traditions, customs, and language of the Albanian people.

Çekrezi is even more emphatic when it comes to the 'Turks': 'the despised Turk has been utterly incapable of exercising any kind of influence on their [the Albanian] national characteristics, language, customs and traditions'.[46]

Another fundamental feature of the Albanian identity and narrative is the myth of a constant national struggle and heroism against various bloodthirsty invaders, of an unremitting fight for centuries for national existence and independence, with Europe more often than not indifferent.[47] This is associated with the antemurale myth, that is of being 'in front of the gates', the image of being the 'the outpost of civilisation, whose values they protect', of being the last defenders of 'Western civilisation' against barbarian hordes (and for the Christian Albanians also the last defenders of Christianity).[48]

There is also the syndrome of 'historical victimisation',[49] with the myths of 'unjust treatment' overlapping 'with myths of martyrdom'.[50] The latter was created in the late nineteenth century but was reinforced by what occurred

in the years 1912–1924 with Albania's precarious independence, multiple invasions and ending up with independence that included only half of the Albanians in the western Balkans (see Chapter 9).[51]

Çekrezi referred to the Albanian struggles with the Romans, the Goths, the Slavs, the Turks and others 'with all the powerful hordes of invaders who poured from time to time into the Balkan Peninsula', concluding in his book *Albania Past and Present*, that 'The Albanian has always been noteworthy for his dogged endurance in resisting the consummation of foreign conquest and occupation of his native soil'.[52] Noli and five other Orthodox Albanian priests submitted a Memorandum to President Woodrow Wilson in which they stated that[53]:

> Of all the Balkan nations, they [the Albanians] were the last to surrender to the Turk but never acknowledged his rule and never bowed to him. While all the other Balkan races were utterly crushed, the Albanians … still defied the Turk early in the nineteenth century.

The Albanian nationalists, as in the case of other Balkan peoples, though in a more difficult position than most of them, having no powerful kingdom or empire to inspire them in their national construction (contrary to the Greeks, Bulgarians or Serbs), 'chose as their symbol the figure of Skanderbeg (or Skenderbeg), who in his heroic tragedy had all the necessary ingredients for building up a myth'.[54] He is a well-established historical figure, whose memory was alive in oral tradition and he had been erected as a heroic national figure first by the Arberesh in southern Italy (see Chapter 6), by de Rada, Schiro and others, to later be taken up as the central national symbol by Sami Frashëri and Naim Frashëri, the Albanian national poet (in particular with his famous long poem of 1898 titled 'The History of Skanderbeg'),[55] and by Ismail Kemal, Konitza and others, with his flag, the double-headed eagle, becoming the Albanian flag.[56]

To the Catholics, Orthodox, and Sufis, Skanderbeg's resistance represents 'a religious and national turning point, where the final defeat introduces an era interpreted as anti-Albanian and anti-religious'.[57] To the Catholics and Orthodox, 'Skanderbeg's heroic defence of nation and Christendom is the zenith of a Golden Age when the nation was completely Christian (to the Orthodox, Orthodox, and to the Catholics, Catholic)' and 'the eventual Ottoman conquest brought in dark, non-Christian forces which forced Albanian and Christian values underground'.[58] For the Bektashi Sufis in view of their conception of 'Turkish' rule 'as anti-Islamic and anti-Albanian', they 'share the Christians' anti-Ottoman view'.[59] To both Sufis and Christians 'the end of the Skanderbeg era introduces a period of national and religious suffering at the hands of anti-Albanian rulers'.[60] As for the Sunni Muslim Albanians 'Skanderbeg is a turning point, but not radical or negative: after Skanderbeg, the national community merges with "Islam", signalling the introduction of glorious times for nation and religion, an era in which their values echo and reinforce each other'.[61]

However as Piro Misha points out, as 'with most myths', Skanderbeg's 'figure and his deeds became a mixture of historical facts, truths, half-truths, inventions and folklore'.[62] But there is no doubt that Skanderbeg's achievements were impressive by any standards, with his mostly victorious armed conflicts, for 24 years, from 1444 to 1467, against the then all-powerful Ottomans (probably the most powerful military force of the fifteenth century), whose deeds had left Europe speechless with admiration (Pope Nicholas V called him 'Champion of Christendom', a title confirmed by three of his successors),[63] and when he died of malaria the European elite mourned him.[64] For the Albanians the association with Skanderbeg gave them national pride, by having such a glorious past, in addition to the ancient Illyrian descent, which was valuable and instrumental in as a basis for erecting Albanian national identity.

Clearly, there are a number of problems with the national romanticised image of Skanderbeg. For one, he was made into 'a national hero of Albanians' and 'the embodiment of the myth of "continuous resistance" against their numerous foes', although his activities had not involved all of the Albanians, certainly not Kosovo (the future Albanian 'Piedmont') nor most of the south inhabited by Albanian speakers.[65] Skanderbeg had first been rendered akin to a myth by none other than the Catholic Church (as the Champion of Christendom)[66] and later by the Arberesh who had discovered him and made him a national figure, stressing his struggle as a Christian and a defender of Christianity against the Muslim Turks.[67] But he is 'a very ambivalent figure', at least by the criteria of modernity, 'having fought against the Turks but at the same time having a Turkish name and title'.[68] Moreover, he had switched for a number of years from Orthodox Christianity to Islam, having become a distinguished high-ranking officer in the Ottoman Army (earning the name Skanderbeg that is with the title of bey). And at the end, for a quarter of a century, he did fight for Christianity against the Muslim Ottomans, which is again very problematic given the fact that since the eighteenth century 70 percent of the Albanians are Muslims.

Moreover in the early fifteenth century one can hardly speak in terms of Skanderbeg's struggle as inspired by a national or proto-national feeling,[69] for it was no more than 'a feudal or a Christian resistance movement to the Ottoman conquest in the fifteenth century'.[70] And his ephemeral quasi-state was no match for Stephan Dushan's Empire of Serbs and Romans, for the Bulgarian empires of Simeon, Samuil, Kaloyan or Ivan Asen II or for the 1100 year Byzantine Empire. In the Balkans only the Macedonians and Bosniaks, whose hour had not yet come, were in a worse position as far as national symbols were concerned.

Given these difficulties, the compromise formula of the Albanian national historical narrative is to underplay the Christian element and to stress the heroic aspect of the Albanian struggle under Skanderbeg, presented as the fight and 'sublime sacrifice of the Albanians in defending Europe from Asiatic hordes'.[71] As put by Sami Frashëri, 'For over forty years Skanderbeg resorted

to fighting by killing and inflicting serious damages to the enemies; …All European powers, at that time, relied on Skanderbeg and expected salvation of Europe to come from Albanians…'.[72] And his brother, Naim Frashëri, in his long poem 'The History of Skanderbeg' writes in verses 265–8, of song XIV: 'Were it not for Albania / The whole blind Europe Would be under Turkey control/ And salvation no more'.[73]

Fatos Lubonja argues that the ambivalence regarding religion of Skanderbeg, being born as a Christian (as Gjergj Kastrioti), then having become Muslim (as Skanderbeg) and then again a Christian (though retaining the latter name even though it was Ottoman), despite its difficulties and ambivalence proved useful, for '[i]n the collective memory of the Albanians, the figure of Skanderbeg (first treated in a national romantics spirit by the Arbëresh, the Albanians of Italy) is removed from its religious content'.[74] This 'fitted a very important historical construct', the one created by Vasa Pasha, that the 'religion of the Albanians is Albanianism'.[75]

The construction of alterity (the threatening 'Others')

As with other nationalities, for the establishment of the modern Albanian identity, there was the urgent need to also erect an alterity, the 'threatening Others', those that were to be regarded the main enemies. As one would have expected there were two obvious candidates, the Greeks and the Ottoman Turks.[76] Chronologically the first *bête noire* were the Greeks, the Greek state and the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the 1870s onwards. The second *bête noire* were the Ottoman Turks, an image which appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century and took some time to become firmly established, mainly from 1910 onwards, this given the prior participation of major Albanians as high officials in the Ottoman state as well as prominent Young Turks. A third threat and enemy which curiously was not as pronounced as the other two, and was mainly the purview of the Ghegs in northern Albania and Kosovo were the Serbs, the Montenegrins, the Bulgarians and generally the Slavic threat, though interestingly not Russia as such.

Among the first to point to the Greek threat was Abdyl Frashëri, who branded the Greeks as enemies of the Albanians even though, as he made sure to point out, the Albanians had shed their blood for Greek independence in the 1820s. He referred to Botzari and Tzavela and repudiated the 'irrational view' of the Greeks that Albanian is a Greek dialect. And he made the point that the Albanians will successfully defend themselves against the Greek attempts to grab Epirus.[77]

Sami Frashëri in famous 1899 book-manifesto put emphasis on alterity so as to further enhance Albanian identity, by stressing who were the enemies and who the potential friends of the Albanians. The enemies were the 'Turks' and the Greeks, the latter trying to Hellenise the Orthodox Albanians and avail themselves of southern Albania. As he put it 'the Greeks through schools, with teachers and books, with physicians … priests, through aphorisms and

persecution by the Church, try to make the Orthodox Albanians, Greeks' and in this strategy the Greeks have 'a powerful friend with whom hand in hand they cooperate together for the Albanian language and the Albanian nation to vanish, and this friend is the Turk who helps Greece and the Patriarchate of the Phanar in this endeavour'; thus[78]

> the government of Turkey does not permit the opening of any Albanian school, does not permit the writing of any book [in Albanian] and does not allow any lesson or progress in the Albanian language. It assists the Greek schools in every way possible keeping the Christian Albanians under the Phanar's yoke.

And he concludes that the Albanian Christians 'should have their own Church so as to save themselves from the yoke of the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian priests' for after all 'Christ was neither a Greek nor a slave'.[79]

For Sami Frashëri enemies of the Albanians are also the Serbs and the Bulgarians which want to avail themselves of Albanian territory in the north and east. As for the European states they could play a positive role, though at the time they were indifferent; and among the main friends of Albania could be counted the Russians who have resisted the Greek claims against Albania.[80] Among 'all the neighbouring nations' he regarded as 'a friend, the Vlach nation'.[81] This was also the view of his brother Naim who asserted that 'the Vlachs are with us'.[82]

In the same wavelength, Sami's brother, the poet Naim Frashëri, severely criticised the Greek policy towards the Albanian nation. And as he put it in more poetic form: 'What is it that you Greeks want from Albania and try to achieve it with lies? …As you cherish the name "Greek" we also cherish the name "Albanian" … We are able to protect Albania', thus if you want our friendship leave our country and 'we will live like neighbours in peace and brotherhood'.[83]

As regards the Greeks, Pashko Vasa harks back to antiquity, pointing out that, the Albanians were the original[84]

> master of the "house" [the region], and the Greeks were the intruders, the invaders, who came to take over the other's place. …Consequently, the predecessors of the Albanians had full claim to a legitimate territorial right. The "Albanian essence" had always its negative Greek counterpart. This dichotomy should indicate the otherness of the Greeks.

According to Çekrezi[85]

> The awakening of the Albanians had two enemies. The Sultan of Turkey and the Greek Patriarch. The awakening of the Albanian people caused fear to these two enemies [of the Albanians] …The Sultan ordered the closing of the Albanian schools and the burning of their books. For his

part the Patriarch issued an aphorism with which he punished all those who were involved with "the cursed Albanian language".

And Çekrezi claimed that 'Greek Byzantine influence is nil on the intellectual side', implying that the Byzantines were nothing but another invader.[86]

The poet, journalist and freedom-fighter Mihal Grameno in his book on the Albanian uprising of 1910–1912, in which he participated, denounced the Ottomans for wanting to destroy the Albanians and the propagation of the national spirit among the Albanians, and claimed that the Greeks are torturing the Albanian people and referred to various concrete examples episodes of Greeks killings Albanians in the early twentieth century.[87]

Equally for Konitza and Kolonja, the Greeks were 'the greatest enemies' for they coveted Albanian native lands. Yet there was at times an element of ambiguity towards the Greeks. For instance, Kolonja acknowledged having been initially a 'grecophile' but had realised that the Greeks lacked sincerity towards the Albanians and moreover had afforded no legal rights to the Albanians of Greece.[88]

There is also the tricky problem of how to deal with the question of Albanian active participation in the Greek Revolution. Overall, there are two tendencies in Albanian national history. According to the majority view seen from 1945 onwards (see below) the Albanians played a major and vital role in what was in effect a joint Albanian cum Greek struggle. The minority view held earlier downgrades the Albanian role, as seen characteristically in the line taken by Pashko Vasa. He claimed that the participation of Albanian leaders in the Greek rebellion was 'a mere individual act of people "pushed by their military spirit, thirsty for fighting" and who were used to have always guns in their hands'.[89] It could also 'be seen in the framework of a religious war, of some Christian Albanian leader fighting against the Moslem Turks', adding that these Christian Albanians 'took part in the revolts only as Christians and they didn't look at this conflict as a national war', and that Christian Albanian leaders 'were conscious of their nationality and they were able to think in national terms, but, the war they were involved in was only a chance to prove their military prowess and adventurous spirit'.[90]

As regards the image of the Greeks in Albanian education, the history school textbooks from the end of the nineteenth century, when the first Albanian schools appeared until the interwar period, referred to the Greeks as one would have expected. The first such book that of Naim Frashëri published in Bucharest in 1886, presented a balanced picture with the positive references to the Greeks more than the negative ones. The image become more negative in the textbooks from 1914 until 1938. In the 1914 textbook, Alexander the Great is referred to as a famous Albanian king and conqueror, while the 1928 textbook refers to Pyrrhus as an Albanian king. Çekrezi's textbook, *Historia e Shqipërisë së re* [History of New Albania] published in Boston in 1921, which was used in Albanian schools, is among the most negative regarding the Greeks

and makes the point that in the past the Christian Albanians had no other choice than to go to Greeks schools and to learn Greek, where they were told (in the Greek schools) that they had to become Greeks.[91]

For instance, Çekrezi in his book mentions, among others, the following:[92]

> The nearest estimate of the number of people of Albanian race is between three and three and a half million, of which nearly two million inhabit the Albania of the London Conference. Taking, however, into account the ravages of the recent wars and especially the losses in human lives resulting from the devastation of Southern Albania by the Greeks in the summer of 1914, it will be nearer the truth to say that Albania has now a population of about 1,500,000.

From 1912 until the eve of the Second World War, the main themes in the textbooks as regards Albanian-Greek relations were four: the southern border of Albania, the rights of the Greek minority, the establishment of the Albanian Orthodox Church and the issue of the Chams living in Greece. The first and fourth subjects were the most delicate ones, while the second, the minority, was a kind of barometer of existing Albanian-Greek relations.[93]

As regards the second threatening other and enemy, the Albanians had to face two major problems and a lesser one: the great Albanian participation in the Ottoman state, in many high positions, including the highest ones (generals, viziers, Grand Viziers); the extended Islamisation which was unprecedented in the Balkans, even though they had previously been devoted Christians[94]; and the lesser problem was the endorsement of the Young Turk Revolution and Albanian participation with the New Turk regime that ensued.

As regards the first problem, they simply ignored it as if it had never taken place and resorted to acute accusation and demonisation of the 'Turks' (see below). However forgetting the second problem (Islamisation) was not possible and they came out with various rationalisations.

Dako provided three imaginative reasons so as to justify Islamisation: (a) that the Orthodox Church did not permit preaching 'the Gospel in the Albanian vernacular', thereby alienating the Albanian people who came to regard Orthodox Christianity 'as a foreign Church to which they could feel little attachment'; (b) that by becoming Muslims they were allowed to wear 'a sword, symbolizing power', which is one of the main 'characteristics of the Albanian people'; and (c) they embraced Islam 'because this pledge gave special political rights for their country'.[95]

Moreover Çekrezi made the well-known point that the Albanians are not 'fanatic in religion', largely a consequence of Bektashism and had never forgotten their former religion, Christianity and that '[w]henever life became intolerable under the Turkish regime, the Albanians found a way of escaping their miserable lot by an outward adoption of the religion of the conqueror'.[96]

Tajar Zavalani, who was a friend of Çekrezi, admitted that Albanian Islamisation was 'in a completely contrary direction to the one taken by the other Balkan peoples', and pondered that '[t]he reason may be that the Albanians were formed spiritually under the influence of Roman paganism, which was added to the pagan traditions of the Illyrians'.[97] He argued that for 'the Illyrians, the development of a national consciousness was not channeled through the acceptance of Christianity' and he adds that 'from the ancient times, the thinking and social activities of the Albanians were characterized by a clear separation between religion and nationality'.[98]

Now as to the lesser problem of involvement, endorsement and later participation in the Young Turk regime, it should be born in mind that the Young Turk Revolution was enthusiastically applauded not only by the Albanians but also by the other minorities throughout the empire, including the Greeks, the Slav speakers (Bulgarians and future Macedonians), the Armenians and the Jews.

Çekrezi has justified the Albanian stance in this regard on the following grounds. The Albanians went along with the Young Turks for if the empire was dismembered so would Albania. And Albania had no other external supporter, contrary to the Slavs of the Balkans who had Russia and the Greeks who had France and England. And until then the Albanians held the top positions in the Ottoman Empire, as high-ranking officers, diplomats or administrators. And moreover with the promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution, Albanian schools were allowed to open, as well as to publish books and journals in Albanian. But the Young Turks abruptly switched their position, trying to create divisions between Muslim and Christian Albanians, closing down the Albanian schools, using the Turkish (Arabic) alphabet for Albania and trying to Turcisise the population, with the Albanians of course reacting accordingly.[99] To his credit, this assessment by Çekrezi is similar to the overall view of serious scholarship.[100]

Moving on to the demonisation of the Turks, Sami Frashëri in his seminal 1899 political treatise asserts that the Albanians had nothing in common with 'the barbaric Turks'[101]:

> They constitute a cruel nation coming from the wilderness of North Asia with a goad in hand. They captured, upon their characteristic cruelty, the most beautiful and civilized countries worldwide; and after mercilessly exploiting, utterly ruining … them, they are as yet keeping them under ferocity, poverty, tyranny that has terrified the world at large. Among all these countries… one is the miserable Albania… Do we have to do with them? Do we share the same origin? No, never! We are neither Turks nor descendants from the wilderness of Asia. We are the oldest nation in Europe; we have our own rights more than any other nation all over Europe.

For Sami Frashëri the Turks are responsible for the misery and ignorance of Albanians: the 'Turks, who have been their masters for over five hundred

years failed to provide Albanians with work, craftsmanship and knowledge, instead, they taught them how to struggle and pillage'.[102]

Dako followed a similar line: 'only one nation has remained in the dark and misery' and this is due to the Ottomans.[103] According to Dako, the Ottomans[104]:

> inaugurated a system of oppression and persecution, and deprived [our people] of the sacred right to educate themselves in their own language, while foreign propaganda and intrigue had a wide open door and a free hand to divide and denationalize the Albanian nation. This foreign propaganda and intrigue was of such a nature that it has not disappeared entirely from amongst us, even in this country [i.e. the USA].

Kolonja asserted that 'the Albanian was an Albanian before he became a Christian or a Mohammedan' and he asks those who prevented the Albanian from learning his own language: 'Did the Prophet know Turkish? Has he said that we should learn that language and abandon ours?'[105] Kolonja maintained that the Turks are Mongolian-Tatar race from the deserts of Asia, which can only destroy and suppress other peoples and the Muslim religion was unable to civilise them and instead rendered them more savage and fanatic.[106]

According to Çekrezi 'Abdülhamid II favored the Albanians as individuals; as a nation, however, he attacked them with the rage and bitterness that characterized his criminal propensities'.[107] In his 'attempt to play down concerns regarding the establishment of a predominantly Muslim state in Christian Europe, he resorts to a language of distaste for Muslims',[108] and refers to the Turks in the following way: 'By the force of circumstances, a Moslem generally implies a Turk, and the Turk is rightly considered a beast, a pitiless persecutor and butcher of Christians' and the Ottoman rule in Albania is described as 'the occupation of… [the] country by the fanatical Asiatic hordes'.[109]

In the interwar years Mid'hat Frashëri (the son of Abdyl Frashëri), a distinguished writer, diplomat (ambassador in Athens and Washington) and politician, in his pamphlet *Plagët tona. Çë nga mungon? Çë duhet të kemi?* (Our wounds. What do we lack? What should we possess?) points to the Ottoman rule as one of the reasons for the Albanians' backwardness, '[t]he five hundred years of Turkish rule, one of the most ominous ever in the world history added to our past deficiencies, thereby shrinking our virtues'[110] and he adds the following[111]:

> Turkey taught us to be increasingly lazier, mare frantic (*sic*); …it taught us to dislike the law, disregard and disobey to it. It taught us to live at the expense of others rather than earn our own living… Education acquired among Janissaries made us be worse and unfair against our weaker brothers, lose any feeling and virtue of nation, find ourselves wild, hostile and divided with each other, totally disunited, disdainful to progress, away from every material goods, as disunited as possible, without collaboration and without solidarity…

Albanian identity and narrative, 1945–today

The modern-day Albanian narrative does not defer considerably from the classical one of the Frashëri brothers, Pashko Vasa, Ismail Kemal, Konitza, Çekrezi, Kalonja, Noli, Dako and the other major figures of Albanian nationalism.[112]

The main themes of the classical period are repeated and reinforced and there are only some additions suited to the two distinct periods of Albanian history from 1945 until today: the communist Enver Hoxha phase and the post-communist one. Interestingly contrary to what has occurred in other Balkan states the differences between the communist and post-communist phase are less obvious than in any other Balkan state that experienced this major transition.[113]

According to Fatos Lubonja (whose father Todi Lubonja was a close associate of Enver Hoxha), the Albanian 'glorious past' during the Hoxha era had 'at least four major moments: the Illyrian battles, the time of Skanderbeg, the Albanian renaissance, and the partisan war. Each of these events had heroes who became principal characters in literary and artistic works created during the communist period'.[114] In the years 1945–1990, the most exalted figures were Skanderbeg and Enver Hoxha. And there were also 'their antiheroes: the Roman invaders, the Turks, the Serbs and the Greeks, the Nazi-Fascists and their Albanian collaborators'.[115]

During Hoxha's regime, the attempt was made to present Albanian history on a scientific basis and the whole approach was autocratic aimed at national enlightenment.[116] The main volumes of history were the two volume *Historia e Shqipërisë* (History of Albania) of 1959 and 1965, the four volume *Historia e Shqipërisë* of 1983–1984, the *Historia e PPSH* (History of the Party of Labour of Albania), first edition in 1968 and second in 1981, as well as the history of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War in four volumes and Hoxha's collected works and what amounted to his testament, a volume of memoirs titled *Laying the Foundations of the New Albania*.[117]

The most sophisticated version of Albanian national history appeared with the book of historians Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania* (1981), with the collaboration of fellow historians Kristo Frashëri and Skënder Anamali, a book endorsed by Hoxha.[118] The book in its French and English versions omitted many of the Marxist inspired interpretations but it remained a fairly simplified rendition of events geared to the needs of the communist and nationalist Albanian ideology, whose main thread was the presentation of the heroic struggle of a people defending themselves from any an array of malignant foreign invaders.[119]

In the pantheon of heroes apart from the addition of Hoxha, Isa Bolletini is also included, the main military leader of the Kosovo uprising of the years 1910–1912. And of course there was emphasis on the Great Patriotic War against the Axis occupiers and fascism, modelled along the Great Patriotic War of Stalin's Soviet Union. Special emphasis was also put on archaeology

and linguistics so as to establish the indigenous character of the Albanians and their origins mainly from the Illyrians. However, the archaeological findings were not very impressive and also showed a considerable influence from ancient Greece or amounted to ancient Greek findings.[120]

From 1945 until the 1950s the origins of the Albanians was 'an open question among Albanian scholars', but when Enver Hoxha (who was an intellectual unlike most of the leaders of his time in communist Europe) declared that the origin was Illyrian (though without denying some Pelasgian roots) 'no one dared participate in further discussion on the question'.[121]

Let us see Hoxha's first public pronouncement in this regard, dated 6 May 1959 at a meeting of the Political Bureau:[122]

> The important problem which merits discussion is that of the origin of our people. This problem can be studied proceeding, first, from the archaeological objects which are solid facts that nobody can dodge, and second, from the language, which, although it undergoes changes in the course of time, is one of the indicators of the origin of a people… It is a fact that Pelasgians existed, but nobody has studied this question thoroughly from the archaeological and linguistic standpoints. Our patriots and writers, such as Naim Frashëri, some German historians and others have said that our people come from the Pelasgians. But documents needed to confirm this origin are still lacking … Count de Gobineau … supports the thesis about the Illyrians … We do not raise the question from the nationalist stand-point and say that we were the most cultured in the world, or more cultured than the Hellenes, but we say that the culture of a people is one thing and their antiquity another … In regard to Illyrian civilization, we have facts and will discover others later... We must not reject the thesis that we come from the Pelasgians, but must study it further… I would propose that the thesis that we come from the Pelasgians should be studied and backed with arguments, because this problem has not been finally solved, while the question of the Illyrians as the ancestors of the Albanian people is proved; nevertheless, the connection between them, between the Pelasgians and the Illyrians, still has to be proved.

In another discussion again in the Political Bureau ten years later (November 1969) again devoted to the origins of the Albanians, he stated the following regarding Alexander the Great[123]:

> It would not be right to say that now we have no need for study of the question of the Pelasgians or of the influence which the Molossi of Epirus had on Alexander the Great, because he was apparently a Greek, although this is not completely correct. Alexander the Great had a Molossian mother, a Macedonian father and he himself was brought up in the land of the Molossi for some time. All these things influenced

> his formation … it is not at all our intention to draw the conclusion that Alexander was an Albanian, or to tell the Greeks that his mother was an Albanian, but to prove that this part of the Balkans … from which his mother came, was not Greek at all, because an entirely different people, the Molossi, lived there … True, these tribes had taken over elements of Greek culture and some Greek customs, but overall, their culture and customs were quite different from those of the Greeks.

The Ottoman conquest as in the classical phase of the Albanian narrative is again presented as 'a Turkish yoke', forgetting (as in the Greek case regarding their participation in high offices in the Ottoman administration) the Albanian participation in the Ottoman state, in their case at the highest echelons. The case of Ali Pasha, which appears as one of the heroes in the Bektashi Albanian narrative, second only to Skanderbeg, having supposedly founded 'the first Albanian national state',[124] is also problematic, given his pro-Greek inclination (see Chapter 3). However the role of the Albanians in the Greek Revolution is presented with glowing colours as a common Albanian-Greek struggle for Greek independence, with special reference made to the Souliots (Botzari, Tzavella), to Hydra (Miaoulis) and Spetses (Bouboulina), and with reference to Kolokotronis as Albanian.[125]

Another standard reference of the Hoxha era is that Albania is surrounded by hostile neighbours, especially by Yugoslavia and Greece (the state but not the Greek people as such) which threaten Albania's very existence, with Greece in the throes of irredentism and also in the business of trying to denigrate the Illyrians of antiquity.[126]

More generally the Hoxha regime, as was the case with the other communist regimes of Eastern Europe linked communism with nationalism,[127] with Hoxha among the most nationalist of communist leaders.[128] Hoxha stance on religion is well known: it was regarded as 'the opium of the people' not allowing Albanian nationalism to flourish and used by foreigner interests to the detriment of Albania, thus it was abolished.[129] In a speech on 6 February 1967, Hoxha instigated a campaign against religion and within a few 'months almost all mosques, churches, and Bektashi tekkes in the country had been closed down, most being demolished or renovated' for other uses (as cinemas, gymnasiums or warehouses), and Albania was proclaimed the 'first atheist state on earth'.[130] Thus Hoxha could pride himself that he had literary realised the famous exhortation that 'the religion of the Albanians is Albanianism'.[131]

From 1990 onwards, in the post-communist era, the narrative has remained largely unchanged, which also includes the partisan war as heroic, though Hoxha and the other communist leaders are not mentioned and Hoxha's statues have been removed (as has been the case in other post-communist states with their communist leaders) and his various views and exhortations deleted.[132]

Albanian historiography is placed 'between primordialism and perennialism'.[133] The idea of 'the natural expansion and transformation of ethnicity into a nation' characterises 'the Albanian historiography in general.[134] In Albanian historiography that 'nations create nationalism and not vice versa', contrary to the modernist approach on nationalism.[135]

As Kriton Kuci and Emilio Cika point out[136]:

> In recent years efforts have been made in order to review some periods and subjects of the Albanian history that traditionally have been presented through a nationalistic narrative, however, the dominant discourse remains the nationalist one. The official Albanian historiography offers a "glorified" explanatory scheme of the reasons for the emergence of the Albanian nationalism using terms such as "national rebirth," "revival of the nation," or "awakening of the nation," which resemble the terms used by nationalists or primordialist scholars of Nationalism. The period 1830–1912 is called "National Revival" and the most important nationalists of the era are called "Renaissance men" (Rilindas).

During the post-communist period, 'it seems that little has changed in the way in which Albanian historiography addresses themes related to Albanian nationalism'.[137] The Albanian Academy of Sciences has published the *History of the Albanian State* in 2002 and the four volume *History of the Albanian People*, the first two volumes in 2007 and the other two in 2008. They amounted to 'a re-publishing' of the earlier editions of *History of Albania* published in 1959 and 1965. They avoid 'the Marxist approach of history' but fail to avoid 'the nationalist approach', with 'the primordialist and perennialist approach' to the Albanian nation and nationalism still prevailing.[138]

According to the 2002 *History of the Albanian State*, 'the advent of the Albanian Enlightenment is claimed to have been accompanied by a war waged against the protagonists of the Albanian Enlightenment by the Greek Patriarchate, which "used religion for its political ends"'.[139]

The official Albanian historiography regards the Albanian nation as 'the natural descendant of the Illyrians therefore, the history of the Albanian people begins with the Illyrians'.[140] According to historian Muzafer Korkuti, who wrote the relevant chapter in *History of the Albanian People*, 'the theories that Illyrians have come and are not autochthonous to the Balkan Peninsula have inconsistencies', while the other theories 'consider the Illyrian culture as a phenomenon that has historically been formed in the Illyrian territory through a long and uninterrupted process'.[141] And he insists that "archaeological research over the last 50 years in Albania shows that Illyrian ethnicity should not be linked to the coming of populations from the northern Balkans but as a long and complex autochthonous process'.[142]

The myth of Skanderbeg remains central in Albanian national historiography. However, in recent years attempts have been made for a more critical perspective regarding Skanderbeg and his times, and of other aspects of national history. Very worthwhile attempts at reappraising and deconstructing the existing national narrative have been made by two eminent writers and analysts, Fatos Lubonja[143] and Piro Misha,[144] and a few others, as well as by younger historians, despite the risk that this might entail carrier-wise (as seen for instance in similar attempts by Bulgarian historians to deconstruct Bulgarian national historiography). But 'any attempt to deconstruct myths of the Albanian historiography' provokes a reaction not only from public opinion but also from 'the majority of Albanian historians',[145] who as scholars should have known otherwise.

Two younger Albanian historians Jonilda Rrapaj and Klevis Kolasi following the modernist and ethnosymbolic theories of nationalism and in particular the approach of the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch, of three stages or phases have presented the advent of Albanian nationalism.[146] Hroch's three phase are the following: Phase A, intellectual interest and scholarly inquiry of an awareness of the various attributes of the particular ethnic group with no national demands (for independence) at this stage; Phase B patriotic activities of the elite to 'awaken' national consciousness among the ethnic group (patriotic agitation); Phase C the transformation of nationalists movements from a narrow one of the elite into a mass movement.[147]

On this basis Rrapaj and Kolasi have come up with the following periodisation:

Phase A, generally speaking it covers the period from the beginning of the Reforms of Tanzimat or the publication of the first Albanian alphabet in 1844 as a symbolic date, until the collapse of the League of Prizren (1881) or the publication of Sami Frashëri's nationalist Manifest in 1899. Phase B intensifies after the crushing of the League of Prizren by the Sublime Porte and especially after the Greek-Ottoman crisis in 1897. It continues even after the declaration of independence because of the fragile or gelatinous state structure. The spread of nationalism to the masses and Phase C starts only with the establishment of a proper state structure and political stability after 1920.26 It was due to the developed state structure and apparatuses in Hoxha's Albania and Tito's Yugoslavia that Albanian national identity spread both among Albanians in Albania and then in Kosovo, despite the differences in dialect and religion.[148]

Notes

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14 *Ibid*., 4.
15 Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 'Narratives of Power: Capacities of Myth in Albania', in Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer (eds.), *Albanian Identities*, 14.
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19 Artan Puto, 'Faik Konitza: The Modernizer of the Albanian Language and Nation', in Diana Mishkova (ed.), *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeast Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 323.
20 Quoted in Puto, 'The Idea of Nation during the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912)', 167.
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22 Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria ç'ka qënë, ç'është dhe çdo të bëhetë?* [*Albania: What She Has Been, What She Is, What She Shall Be*] (Bucharest, 1899).
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24 Malcolm, 'Myths of Albanian National Identity', 73–4.
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28 Quoted in *ibid*., 77.
29 Quoted in Puto, 'The Idea of Nation during the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912)', 126.
30 Quoted in *ibid*., 125.
31 Quoted in Malcolm, 'Myths of Albanian National Identity', 77.
32 In *ibid*., 77.
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35 *Ibid*., 79.

36 *Ibid*., 79–80.
37 *Ibid*.
38 *Ibid*., 80.
39 *Ibid*., 80.
40 Quoted in *ibid*., 81.
41 In *ibid*., 81.
42 *Ibid*., 80.
43 Quoted in *ibid*., 81.
44 Quoted in *ibid*., 80.
45 Quoted in Konstantinos Giakoumis, 'Against the Imperial Past: The Perception of the Turk and the Greek "Enemy" in the Albanian National Identity-Building Process', in Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Imagined Empires: Tracing Imperial Nationalism in Eastern and Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021), 290.
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49 Misha, 'Invention of Nationalism', 41–4.
50 Endresen, *Is the Albanian's Religion Really "Albanianism"?*, 234.
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52 Quoted in Malcolm, 'Myths of Albanian National Identity', 81.
53 Quoted in *ibid*., 82.
54 Misha, 'Invention of Nationalism', 43.
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57 Endresen, *Is the Albanian's Religion Really "Albanianism"?*, 211.
58 *Ibid*., 231.
59 *Ibid*., 231.
60 *Ibid*., 231.
61 *Ibid*., 211.
62 Misha, 'Invention of Nationalism', 43.
63 Skendi, *Balkan Cultural Studies*, 205.
64 Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 496–7. For details of Skanderbeg's extraordinary military campaigns see Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania from Its Origins to the Present Day* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 68–84; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 7–9; Jena Marc Bertrand, *History of Albania: Albanians under Ottoman Rule, Italian Penetration, Self-Governance, Origins of the Political System, Economy* (Kindle Edition, 2016), locations 307, 328–39; Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 398–402.
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97 Quoted in *ibid*., 87.
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137 *Ibid*., 71.
138 *Ibid*., 71.
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8 Greek-Albanian relations from the League of Prizren (1878) until Albania's Declaration of Independence (1912)

The rise of Albanian nationalism in the late 1870s put the Greek Government on the alert and it thus created three more consulates to the three that already existed in Janina, Preveza and Vlora, in Durres, Girokaster and Berat. Athens gave large amounts of money to local notables whom it regarded as Greeks or pro-Greek, but its main device used also in other areas sought by Greece, notably in Macedonia,[1] was to set up more schools, even though the existing ones, under the Patriarchate, were considerable. However contrary to the state of play until 1878, Greece now send school teachers from Greece imbued with the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), graduates of the University of Athens, so as to instil Greek consciousness and propagate the idea of union with Greece, in the spirit of Greek irredentism, a policy also followed in other parts of the Ottoman Empire (in Macedonia, in the hinterland of western Asia Minor as well as Cyprus),[2] with the Ottoman authorities, with a few exceptions, taking no measures to curtail these activities or otherwise stop the fomenting of disloyalty to the Ottoman state. These schools in the region were intended for all the Christian inhabitants, be they Greek speakers, Albanian speakers or Vlach speakers and such was the quality of many of these establishments and of their staff that even a number of Muslims had chosen to study there instead of in the Ottoman schools.[3]

A case in point is the Greek Zosimaia Lyceum of Janina (founded by the Zosima brothers during the Ali Pasha period), with its high standards (which taught the history of ancient Greece and Rome as well as various languages such as French, Italian, Ancient Greek and Latin), whose pupils included major future Albanian figures, such as Jani Vreto, Konstandin Kristoforidhi, Christakis Zographos and Anastasios Pykaios (Anastas Byku), but also scions of the Albanian Muslim elite, such as two of the three Frashëri brothers, Sami and Naim, Ismail Kemal and the poet Ali Asllani.[4]

In general, from the aftermath of the Greek Revolution and Greek independence until the early twentieth century, the prevailing view in Greece was that the Albanians are neither fanatical Muslims nor loyal to the Porte and have a non-existent or fluid national consciousness.[5] As for the Orthodox Christian Albanians living to the north of Greece, that is the Orthodox Christian Tosks, they were regarded as Greeks or potentially Greeks.

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The first decades of Greek-Albanian relations, 1877–1906

The Greek Government was opposed to Albanian nationalism for well-known reasons, the northern expansion of Greece along the *Megali Idea* (see Chapter 4). Yet in 1877–1878, a series of secret meetings took place, four in all, between Greek officials and Albanian personalities, most of them with Abdul Bey Frashëri and Mehmet Ali Bey Vrioni, who were both elected members of the short-lived first Ottoman Parliament.

The thrust of the Greek proposal was the creation of a dual Greek-Albanian state modelled along Austria-Hungary, with King George of Greece the monarch of Greeks and Albanians. In the talks much was made by the Greek interlocutors of the Slavic threat to both Greeks and Albanians. In these talks, the main expert on Albanian affairs was diplomat Epaminondas Mavrommatis, who had served as consul in Durres. The third and fourth rounds of talks were headed by banker Stephanos Skouloudis (of Arvanite origin, later cabinet minister and brief Prime Minister in 1915–1916), who referred not only to the Slavic threat but also to future threats by Italy and Austria-Hungary in the Albanian-inhabited regions. It seems that Frashëri was not totally opposed to the idea of a dual state. The main problem that arose was the Greek-Albanian border of a future dual state, with the Greeks wanting Girokaster and Delvina, which of course the Albanians could not accept.[6]

Mavrommatis who had travelled north of Durres to the Gheg regions up to Shkoder, had reached the conclusion that an Albanian state could be created only in the north in Gheg territory. He informed his superiors that the Orthodox Christian Tosks of the south had no clear national consciousness and were prepared to cooperate with the Greeks and identified with Hellenism, so much so that he chose to call them 'Albano-Greeks' or 'Greco-Albanians'. He went as far as to maintain that even the Muslim Tosks would be prepared to align with the Greeks, rather than with the alien Muslim Ghegs.[7]

The Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878) with its Greater Bulgaria scheme, with territories inhabited by Albanians, Greeks and Vlachs given to Bulgaria as well as to Serbia and Montenegro, infuriated the Albanians and Greece, but also Italy, under its Foreign Minister (and later Prime Minster) Francesco Crispi (who was of Albanian origin, an Italo-Albanian). Crispi went as far as to propose to Greece a joint Italian-Greek occupation of Epirus and made the point that Albania had more right to becoming an independent state than Serbia or Bulgaria.[8]

In the Congress of Berlin (June–July 1878) where the Albanian claims were ignored (see Chapter 6), Greece, headed by Foreign Minister (and later Prime Minister) Theodoros Deliyiannis managed to gain the consent of the great powers for a change in the Greek-Ottoman borders, involving Thessaly and Epirus, which the Ottomans could not reject given their defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878. The Porte dragged its feet in the negotiations with Greece and tried to enlist the League of Prizren in its support as regards Epirus, but at the end handed over the whole of Thessaly, but

salvaged most of Epirus, apart from the city of Arta and some neighbouring regions, much to the relief of the Albanians (see Chapter 6).[9]

From 1880 until 1906 Greece did its utmost to stem the blossoming of Albanian nationalism, but to no avail for the seed of Albanian nationalism had already born fruit.[10] At this juncture, it is worth stressing that the Patriarchate of Constantinople was since the 1870s with the clash with the Bulgarian Church (the Exarchate), a close ally of Athens in its *Megali Idea* project.[11] The Patriarchate went as far as to threaten the Orthodox Christian Albanians with aphorism if they chose to write in Albanian and the priests were instructed to inform their Orthodox flock that God was not in the position to understand their prayers if they were in Albanian![12]

Elias Skoulidas has identified four schools of thought in Greece from 1880 until 1912, apart from the view of Mavromattis, which were predominant in the Greek Foreign Ministry and in public discourse.[13]

One view was that the Albanian are 'a distinct race' from the Greeks but they do not constitute a separate nation, hence they would be assimilated by the Greeks, whether they like it or not, the thesis of historians Konstantinos Paparigopoulos and of his successor at the University of Athens, Pavlos Karolides, of politician and jurist Leon Melas (with his book *The Albanian Question*) and physician and politician Loukas Bellos (with his book *Albanian or the Three Extant Dialects of the Greek language*). One of their main arguments was that the Albanians could not become a nation for, it was claimed, they lacked a history, culture or literature.[14]

A second view was that the Albanians were in fact the same race as the Greeks and in substance the same nation, a thesis first presented by Panayiotis Aravantinos (the first Greek Epirus-specialist) and followed by the journalist Thomas Paschides, cartographer and historian Mihail Chrysochoos, novelist and poet Christos Christovassilis and others, most of them alluding to the Pelasgian and Illyrian roots of both the Albanians and the Greeks and to common heroes, such Pyrrhus and Skanderbeg.[15]

A third view was that realistically speaking the Albanians, whatever they may be, could simply not create a state, thus their only option was union with Greece in a dual monarchy, an opinion held by law professor Neoklis Kazazis (president of the society *Ellinismos*), an ardent supporter of the *Megali Idea*, a view shared by Premier Charilaos Trikoupis, a moderate and the foremost Greek politician of the second part of the nineteenth century, as well as by King George and most diplomatic officials.[16]

The fourth view was the cynical one, that the Albanians, given impotence and divisions, had no other choice than to seek union with Greece, to be annexed as part of Greece and not as part of a dual state.[17]

In the last decades of the nineteenth century various organisations comprised of Hellenised Albanians (Arvanites) in Greece on their own or with the assistance of the Greek state, promoted the first three of the above four variants. A key figure in these activities was General Dimitrios Noti Botzaris (son of Notis Botzaris the Souliot chieftain of the Greek War of Independence),

who had fought as a youngster in the Greek Revolution and had been active in 1854, together with General Kitsos Tzavelas (another scion of another famous Souliot family) in trying to bringing about an uprising in Ottoman Epirus for union with Greece. Botzaris who had risen to the rank of Lieutenant General and had served as Army Minister, presided in two of the Greek Arvanite organisations.[18]

In the wake of the Greek defeat in the Greek-Ottoman War of 1897, a new organisation was set up in Athens named 'Albanian Union of Greece', by Greek-Albanians of Greece, which called upon the Albanians in the Ottoman Empire to put aside their differences with the Greeks, differences that had been fomented, it was claimed, on purpose by the Ottomans, so as not to allow the natural Greek-Albanian alignment against them. As it was said characteristically: 'Greece without Albania and Albania without Greece are only their half'.[19] At that time, the general Albanian reaction was not negative, provided that a union was to be between two equal parties that would retain their respective autonomy. The Albanian stance was probably due to various manoeuvres at the time of Austria-Hungary, Italy as well and especially of Serbia, whose ultimate aim was the absorption of Albania, with the prospect of Albanian independence still dim.[20]

With the advent of the twentieth century and as Albanian nationalism was hardly a spent force but on the rise, the Greek Epirotes and Hellenised Albanians who lived in Greece were increasingly worried, and thus they set up a secret organisation on 25 March 1906, named *Epirus Elefthera* (Free Epirus), better known as Epirote Society. It was headed mainly by the military, under the leadership of Colonel Panayiotis Daglis, and its most active and uncompromising member was Spiros Spiromilios, an officer of the Gendarmerie. The organisation in question was given some financial support by the Greek state, and was energetic in Ottoman Epirus with extended propaganda, assisted in this endeavour by the Greek consuls and the Orthodox Greek priests in the region.[21]

The years 1907–1912

From 1907 until 1912, prior to the two Balkan Wars, official Greece, contrary to the Epirote Society, favoured a conciliatory approach towards the Albanians, and made various gestures of good will towards the Albanian leaders. The assessment then of the Greek Foreign Ministry was that time was running out and the forces against the Greek aims were on the ascendency fomented by Italy. The opposite line of the Epirote Society, with supporters in the administration and army, was that such gestures were redundant for the Albanians were too weak to set up a viable independent state and were hardly a nation to reckon with. It was claimed that Albanian nationhood had been an Italian and Austrian invention with no roots, but for a small group of supporters among the Albanians. And as for the southern part of Albania, with its many Orthodox Greeks and Orthodox Christian Tosk Albanians (who had become

Greeks, as the Souliots in the 1820s or were about to become Greeks), it was ripe for Greek annexation. The main obstacles were not the Albanians (not even the Muslims among them) but Italy and its designs in the very region coveted by Greece (Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro coveted other territories of Albania to the north in the Gheg inhabited regions).[22]

The moderate line that prevailed until the eve of the First Balkan War was that the Albanians nationalism had come to stay and this as such was hardly a bad thing for Greek interests. Consequently, Greece was not opposed to the creation of an independent Albanian state, provided the new state did not include Epirus, southern Epirus (Janina) but also what soon came to be known as 'Northern Epirus' (*Voreios Epirus*), that is to the extent that the Albanians would abandon the quest for a 'Greater Albania'. This line was adopted by Prime Ministers Georgios Theotokis and Stephanos Dragoumis, and by the formidable Eleftherios Venizelos when he took over power in 2010, following the 1909 Coup of Goudi. The main advocates of this approach were diplomat and later Foreign Minister Lambros Koromilas, diplomat and later major politician Ion Dragoumis, Professor Kazazis, and in particular Antonios Sahtouris, the official of the Greek Foreign Ministry in charge of the Albanian question. According to this thesis, which like the uncompromising stance was based on the *Megali Idea*, though more subtly and flexibly, a future Albanian state would be a natural ally of Greece against common enemies, the Slavic and pan-Slavic threats from Serbia and Bulgaria as well as Italy's designs. And within this scheme of things the original idea of a dual monarchy remained a possibility, though more remote than before.[23]

From 1900 onwards Greek officials started cultivating relations with Ismail Kemal Bey, the main liberal Albanian national leader at the time, who had started his career as a high official of the Ottoman Empire as a close associate of the great reformist Grand Vizier, Midhat Pasha. Ismail Kemal, whose wife was Greek and who had studied in the Zosimaia Lyceum (and spoke fluent Greek) was supportive of an Albanian-Greek rapprochement, more or less for the same reasons as the Greek officials at the time, so as to erect a barrier and have a common stand against the encroaching Slavs and pan-Slavism that threatened both parties.[24] In one of his several visits to Athens, where he was cordially hosted, he arrived at an understanding with Prime Minister Theotokis, which appears to have been 'a secret agreement' for an independent Albania whose southern borders were to be 'west of the city of Monastir [Bitola] that would reach a point north of Corfu and the neighbouring islands'.[25] This agreement, written by hand in Greek by Ismail Kemal himself, also referred in detail to various forms of cooperation, including educational matters, publications and propaganda, with the assistance of the Greek consulates in the region, and included even assistance in arms.[26]

Clearly the agreement did not amount to an official inter-state treaty for Ismail Kemal was not the head of a state or government at the time, and he represented only the view of one group of Albanian leaders. However, for

Athens it was 'a serious recognition' of the extent of Greek influence and the acceptance of Greece's desiderata as regards the future frontiers by the foremost Albanian politician at the time.[27] As one would have expected, Greek commentators until today tend to make much of this agreement.[28] But Ismail Kemal for his part makes no reference at all to this understanding in his memoirs, even though he does mention the Greeks positively when he refers to his sojourns in Athens.[29] The Albanians for their part regard the agreement non-existent and a Greek fabrication.

At the time a Greek-Albanian society and committee was set up, aimed at better knowledge of the two peoples and dedicated to the task of creating an Albanian state. The committee was headed by Kazazis, who together with Ismail Kemal launched the idea of a Greek-Albanian federation.[30] Moreover, a special protocol was adopted aimed at promoting Greek-Albanian cooperation, with Kazazis as the protagonist.[31] And in a dinner hosted by Kazazis to Ismail Kemal, following the adoption of the protocol and other documents, Kazazis's friend, the Epirote novelist Christovassilis, recited a poem of his which runs as follows: 'In this world there were two beloved sisters/Glories sisters and honour's pride/Both wore a panoply and had a sword/And free they lived and enjoyed the world'.[32]

These meetings and agreement were condemned by the Greek hard-liners, such as Spiromilios and others, who regarded such dealings and understandings superfluous, not least regarding frontiers for they were convinced that all the Orthodox Christian Albanians were Greeks and those who were not were potentially Greeks and would never become Albanians.[33]

The main representative of the moderate line was Sahtouris, who was a scion of the Sahtouris family of Hydra active in the Greek Revolution. He had visited extensively Albania in 1910, as had done Mavromattis 40 years before, where, via the help of Ismail Kemal, with whom he had developed a rapport,[34] he met with several Albanian personalities. The outcome of this trip was an important memoire entitled 'The Albanian Question' which he submitted to Premier Venizelos. According to Sahtouris's assessment that came to be shared by Venizelos, not only the Greek speakers but also the Orthodox Christian Albanian speakers had 'a crystalized Greek consciousness', the exception being only some who had been influenced by Albanian nationalism. Sahtouris, who was no hard-liner, reported that some 220,000 Orthodox Christian Albanians who inhabited the three of the four vilayets had attained '95 percent Greek national consciousness'.[35]

The above assessment became an axiom of Greek foreign policy within its nationalist *Megali Idea* ideology which no one dared question.[36] In fact Sahtouris was aware that his assessment was exaggerated and that the number of Albanians with Albanian national consciousness among the Orthodox Christians were much more. And contrary to most Greeks at the time he did not regard the Albanians politically immature, unable to set up an independent entity, but tried to convince his Albanian friends that dual state idea was their best option in view of the Slavic as well as the pan-Germanic threat. He went as far

as to point out to them the existence of the Arvanites in Greece, who were free to use their language and had risen to the highest offices of the Greek state.[37]

In 1909, 1910 and even more so in 1911–1912 the Albanian revolted under Hasan Bey Phristina, who was close to Ismail Kemal and presented the Porte with the so-called 'Fourteen Points', most of which the Ottoman state, then under the Liberals, was prepared to accept (see the end of Chapter 6), but the coming of the First Balkan War put an end to this course.[38] Greece for its part was not poised against the Albanian claim to autonomy, but could not accept the union of all the vilayets under Albanian administration for this would have meant losing the most cherished price, the vilayet of Janina.[39]

The 1912 Albanian Declaration of Independence

In the first two decades of the twentieth century no less than six states were convinced that they had vital interests in one or more of the four vilayets, four of them neighbouring Balkan countries, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, and two great powers, Italy and Austria-Hungary (see end of Chapter 6).

In view of this, with four Balkans states on the prowl, Italy and Austria-Hungary, though bitter rivals in the region, decided separately and not for the same reasons, that an independent Albania was more to their interests than one torn among the four Balkan 'wolves' and were 'reluctant to see either a South Slav state or Greece astride the strategic Otranto Strait at the exit of the Adriatic Sea into the Mediterranean'.[40] Austria-Hungary's interest in the region dated back to the seventeenth century for the protection of the north Albanian Catholics and now Vienna had extended economic interests in the region and was in no way prepared to allow Serbia to find an outlet in the Adriatic Sea[41]; it could not accept the division of the Albanian territories between Serbia and Greece or Italy having a foothold in that part of the Adriatic. Italy, contrary to the days when Crispi held sway, was vehemently opposed to Greece's annexation of southern Albania and became engaged in various economic initiatives in the area and sought to be influential also for strategic reasons, aiming to control the Adriatic along its *Adriatico mare nostrum* doctrine.[42]

In March 1912, Ismail Kemal went to Corfu where he met Premier Venizelos and Foreign Minister Koromilas, who agreed that with Greece's financial assistance to set up an Albanian centre in Paris and publish a newspaper. At this juncture it seems that Ismail Kemal was more interested in the recognition of Albanian nationality and not to secede (this was also the view of Sahtouris who had conveyed this course of action to him).[43] Indeed until a few months prior to Albania's Declaration of Independence which was his crowning achievement, Ismail Kemal 'remained a firm supporter of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, while considering the problem of nationalities as the main one for the Ottoman government'.[44] He still stood for the integrity

of the Ottoman Empire, provided it turned itself into a truly democratic and just state for all its nationalities.[45]

The outbreak of the First Balkan War, with four states on the attack, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece, in what known as the Balkan League, was a nightmare for the Albanians and their cause, in view of the well-known goal of the Balkan League states to avail themselves of all four vilayets. How could the Albanians save their land and set the stage for a future independence? They ended up aligning themselves with the Ottomans and fighting with them, along the logic of 'Better the devil you know'.[46] But the Albanian leaders made sure to inform the great powers that they had reached this decision not in order to retain Ottoman rule but because they felt that with the Ottomans they would be in a better position to defend their territory and avoid its dismemberment.[47]

As the Serbian and Montenegrin armies were advancing and nearing the Adriatic, with the Greek Army advancing into Epirus, the Albanians 'finally came to terms with the fact that the Ottoman Empire was about to be ejected from Europe'.[48]

The Ottoman Grand Vizier, Kiamil Pasha, pressed Ismail Kemal to stand by him and offered him a ministry, but he refused. Ismail Kemal realising that there was no future for the Albanians in the Ottoman Empire turned himself 'into an Albanian activist leader, but never denying his Ottoman devotion till the last moments. What remained was only a feeling of regret for having failed to build up a reformed Ottoman state like a house for all people'.[49]

He thus sprang into action, travelling to Bucharest where he held a meeting with the large Albanian colony there and 15 of his compatriots decided to go with him to Albania. He made sure to telegraph to various parts of Albania announcing his intended arrival and the need to convene a national congress at Valona.[50]

Ismail Kemal before going to Albania travelled to Budapest and Vienna in quest of diplomatic support and also contacted British and Italian officials informing them that a conference would be organised to take crucial decisions about how to avoid dismemberment.[51] The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Leopold Berchtold whom Ismail Kemal met in Budapest, was forthcoming, and arranged for a vessel to convey him to Durres (Valona was blockaded in view of the approaching Serbian Army).[52] The Italian Foreign Minister San Giuliano was also positive, though Ismail Kemal had more confidence on the sincerity of Austria-Hungary in assisting the Albanians.[53] Ismail Kemal, while in Vienna, made sure to also contact the Greek envoy there, for him to inform Koromilas. He told him that with the agreement of Austria-Hungary Albanian independence was to be declared, asking for the assistance and the future recognition of Albanian independence, adding that as to the question of frontiers between the two countries they were to be decided amicably between the two governments in the near future.[54]

Ismail Kemal left for Vlora and arrived there on 26 November, where the inhabitants greeted him with enthusiasm. Two days later, on 28 November, 'under very precarious circumstances',[55] with the Serbian Army *ante portas*, the Albanian Conference was in session, comprising of 83 representatives, Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics. On the first day of the meeting, following a brief presentation by Ismail Kemal, the independence of Albanian was solemnly declared, followed by the appointment of the ministers of what was to be a Provisional Government under Ismail Kemal.[56]

Let us see how Ismail Kemal describes these momentous events in his memoirs[57]:

> The Congress was at once opened. At its first sitting — November I5th-28th, 1912 — it voted unanimously the proclamation of independence. The sitting was then suspended, and the members left the hall to hoist upon my house — the house where I was born and where my ancestors had lived — amid the acclamations of thousands of people, the glorious flag of Scanderbeg, who had slept wrapped in its folds for the last 445 years. It was an unforgettable moment for me, and my hands shook with hope and pride as I fixed to the balcony of the old dwelling the standard of the last national Sovereign of Albania. It seemed as if the spirit of the immortal hero passed at that moment like a sacred fire over the heads of the people. …I notified the constitution of the new State to the Powers and the Sublime Porte …

The notification was by way of a telegram to the great powers and to the Sublime Porte that read as follows[58]:

> The National Assembly, consisting of delegates from all parts of Albania, without distinction of religion, who have today met in the town of Valona, have proclaimed the political independence of Albania and constituted a Provisional Government entrusted with the task of defending the rights of the Albanian people, menaced with extermination by the Serbian Armies, and of freeing the national soil invaded by foreign forces. In bringing these facts to the knowledge of Your Excellency, I have the honour to ask the Government … to recognise this change in the political life of the Albanian nation.
>
> And the following was added:
>
> The Albanians, who have entered into the family of the peoples of Eastern Europe, of whom they flatter themselves that they are

> the eldest, are pursuing one only aim, to live in peace with all the Balkan States and become an element of equilibrium. They are convinced that the Government of His Majesty, as well as the whole civilised world, will accord them a benevolent welcome by protecting them against all attacks on their national existence and against any dismemberment of their territory.
>
> Ismail Kemal then refers to the Ottoman reaction. As he adds in his memoirs[59]:
>
> The Sublime Porte, immediately on receiving our notification of independence, set itself in opposition to our aspirations. The Grand Vizier, in a telegram replying to my note, tried to impose on us, as Sovereign, a member of the Imperial family. According to him, Albania could only be saved by being the vassal of the Ottoman Empire, with a Prince of the Imperial family. On what Power, he asked, did she expect to rely? On Austria? On Italy? … My reply was that Albania relied neither on Italy nor Austria, but on the rights of the Albanians to exist and have a nationality of their own, as well as on the duty of the Powers to respect nationalities. I added that Turkey could not but be a bad advocate of the cause of free nationalities, and that Albania would prefer to defend her cause herself, but that, on the other hand, when the final solution came, she would do all she could to prevent the new situation from being an obstacle to good relations with the Sublime Porte.

The Provisional Government was comprised of Ismail Kemal as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, the economist Myfid Libohova as Interior Minister, Abdi Bey Toptani as Economics Minister, General Mehmed Pashë Deralla (a former Ottoman officer) as War Minister, Luigj Gurakuqi as Education Minister and Mid'hat Frashëri as Minister for Publications.

The Albanians proclaimed independence of what they called 'ethnic' or 'ethnographic' Albania, which included the whole of the vilayets of Shkoder and Janina, four of the sanjaks of the vilayet of Skopje (Kosovo) and three sanjaks of the vilayet of Monastir (Bitola).[60]

The immediate reaction of the Greek press was unrelenting: 'to allow the barbarous Albanians an independent existence amidst Greek civilization was inconceivable'.[61] But the Venizelos Government was not carried away by such outrageous utterances, stating that Greece was by no means adverse to the creation of an Albanian state, provided the state in question was within the geographical limits set in the Ismail Kemal – Theotokis understanding of 1907.[62]

The Serbian reaction from the lips of the Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić (the most important Serbian politician of the first quarter of the twentieth century) was that 'an independent Albania was neither desirable nor possible'.[63]

The negative Serbian posture was due to the necessity of an outlet in the Adriatic that could not come about if an independent Albania was established. But it was also probably due to the fact that when the Serbian Army entered the vilayet of Skopje, which they regarded as 'old Serbia' and part and parcel of their cherished national heritage (the seat of Stefan Dushan's empire)[64] and proceeded to its interior to Prizren and Pristina, that is today's Kosovo, where the famous 1389 Battle of the Kosovo field (the Field of the Blackbirds) had taken place, the Serbs, as Ivo Banac has sarcastically put it, 'were so dazzled with the bright glow of recovered lands associated with Serbian history and identity that they almost failed to notice that hardly any Serbs were left in "Old Serbia"', discovering to their utter dismay that 'the overwhelming majority of the people were Albanians'.[65]

Thus the Serbs reacted ferociously, burning many villages to the ground, indulging in many atrocities and torturing and killing many Albanians who were not prepared to change their religion and become Orthodox and thus presumably become Serbs. The appalling behaviour of the Serbs was amply reported among others by the pro-Albanian British anthropologist Edith Durham, by Lev Bronstein (soon to be known as Leon Trotsky), by the Catholic archbishop of Skopje in a report to the Pope and a little later in the famous Carnegie Endowment, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (1914).[66]

The Serbs were in a state of anti-Albanian paroxysm,[67] which was to be repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, in the years 1985–1999 against the Kosovar Albanians. Even the Serbian socialists who criticised this anti-Albanian paroxysm and the war as amounting to 'a classic colonial war', were opposed to Albanian independence.[68] The otherwise moderate and liberal politician Stojan Protić (writer, interior minister in the 1900s and in 1918–1920 Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) regarded the Albanians '"criminal interlopers" capable only of the sort of freedom that exists in the wild'.[69] The equally moderate and respected politician Vladan Đorđević (writer, mayor of Belgrade and Prime Minister of Serbia in 1897–1900, a major public health specialist and distinguished surgeon) in a book written in French, in Paris, titled *Les Albanais et le grand puissances* (1913) and simultaneously in German, in Leipzig, maintained, '[c]iting various foreign travelers and doctors of anthropology' that the Albanians are 'skinny and short, possessed of gipsy and Phoenician features', 'reminding him of the "prehumans, who slept in the trees, to which they were fastened by their tails"'. And he claimed in all seriousness that whereas 'as other human beings had lost their simian tails in the course of evolution, it seemed that the Albanians had their tails well into the nineteenth century. They were modern Troglodytes, with bestial teeth …'.[70]

Reverting to the 1912 Albanian independence, it was 'more theoretical than real as the authority of the new Albanian state did not extend far beyond' the town of Vlora, 'but it proved decisive for the future'.[71]

Notes

1 Alexis Heraclides, *The Macedonian Question and the Macedonians: A History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 9.
2 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, 'Greek Irredentism in Asia Minor and Cyprus', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26:1 (1990), 9; Richard Clogg, 'The Greek *Millet* in the Ottoman Empire', in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: H & M Publishers, 1982), 197–8.
3 Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origins du nationalisme albanais: La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Éditions KARTHALA, 2007), 113–5.
4 Elias G. Skoulidas, 'Ellines proxenoi se "Epiro kai Alvania" sta teli tou 19ou aiona' [Greek Consuls in 'Epirus and Albania' at the End of the 19th Century], in Lina Ventoura and Lambros Baltsiotis (eds.), *To ethnos peran ton synoron* [The Nation Beyond the Borders] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2013), 89–90, 103; Clayer, *Aux origins du nationalisme albanais*, 114–5; Artan Puto, 'The Idea of Nation during the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912)', doctoral thesis, European University Institute (Florence, 2010), 51–2; Jonilda Rrapaj and Klevis Kolasi, 'The Curious Case of Albanian Nationalism: The Crooked Line from a Scattered Array of Clans to a Nation-State', *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 44 (2013), 205.
5 Basil C. Gounaris, *Den einai o persinos kairos… Ellines kleftarmatoloi kai Alvanoi stasiastes (1829–1831)* [It Is Not the Previous Time… Greek Brigands and Albanian Insurgents (1829–1831)] (Athens: Ethniko Idryma Erevnon, 2019), 35.
6 Evangelos Kofos, *I Ellada kai to Anatoliko Zitima, 1875–1881* (Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, 2001), 117–9; Kristo Frashëri, *Historia e Camerise. Veshtrim Historik* [History of Chameria: A Historical Vision] (Tirana: UET Press, 2015), 164–5. See also Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 175; Skoulidas, 'Ellines proxenoi se "Epiro kai Alvania" sta teli tou 19ou aiona', 94–6.
7 Elias G. Skoulidas, 'I "apokalipsi" tis "Alvanias": ellinikes "prosplipseis" sta teli tou 19ou aiona' [The 'Discovery' of 'Albania': Greek 'Attitudes' at the End of the 19th Century], in Despina I. Papadimitriou and Serafim I. Seferiades (eds.), *Atheates opseis is istorias: kimena afieromena ston Yiani Yianoulopoulo* [Unseen Aspects of History: Texts Dedicated to Yianis Yianoulopoulos] (Athens: Ekdoseis Asini, 2012), 379–82.
8 Ioannis S. Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', *Balkan Studies*, 50 (2015), 160 and 160 footnote 1.
9 Kofos, *I Ellada kai to Anatoliko Zitima, 1875–1881*; Basil Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies: Ellada kai Albania ston 20o aiona* [Delicate Balances: Greece and Albania in the 20th Century] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1994), 18–22; Mihalis Kokolakis, *To istero Gianniotiko Pasaliki: choros, dioikisi kai plithismos stin tourkokratoumeni Epiro (1820–1913)* [The Late Janina Pashalik: Venue, Administration and Population in Turkish-Held Epirus (*1820–1913*)] (Athens: National Institute of Research, 2003), 85; Alexander Kitroeff, 'Greek Nationhood and Modernity in the 19th c.', *Balkan Studies*, 40:1 (1999), 36.
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65 Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) [1984], 292. In fact this statement by the Croatian historian is a stark oversimplification. Serbia had in the previous decades kept an eye on the region, by among others having set up a consulate in Pristina to monitor the situation and was thus fully aware of the fact that the great majority of inhabitants were Albanians and not Serbs. See Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 55–6.
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9 Greek irredentism and Greek-Albanian relations

The 'Northern Epirus Question' (first phase, 1912–1920) and Albania's precarious independence

'Northern Epirus'

Historically one of the thorniest problems that has bedevilled Greek-Albanian relations and entanglements for most of the twentieth century, from 1912 until 1995 to be exact, is the 'Northern Epirus Question' (*Voreioepirotiko*), a term used only by Greece and rejected by Albania as preposterous and as an expression of unfounded expansionism on the part of Greece.

The official end of this controversial question came about with the 1996 Treaty of Friendship between Greece and Albania. However, although it has been put to rest as far as Greece is concerned, it still haunts the Albanians, who at times seems to regard the issue dormant but not buried for good, and as potentially resurgent in the not too distant future, perhaps as a bargaining counter linked with Albania's accession to the EU and in view of the existence of several pending unresolved issues in Greek-Albanian relations (see Chapter 14).

The date of the first appearance of the problem and of the term as such is 1912, although its roots as a potential poison in Greek-Albanian relations are to be found in the previous three decades from the late 1870s onwards.

The 'Northern Epirus Question' passed through three main phases: (a) 1912–1920, (b) 1940–1967, and (c) 1990–1995. In the interwar period, Greece appeared to acquiesce with the existing borders with Albania, while in fact it had not really abandoned its claim to Northern Epirus as it continued to call it.[1]

The re-emergence of the issue by Athens in the early 1990s raised many an eyebrow internationally for the question was barely known or if known to some diligent diplomats and historians, it was regarded as safely dead. What were the Europeans and Americans to make of this curiosity, which they hoped was no more than a storm in a tea cup or red herring, given the huge and seemingly intractable problems besetting the Western Balkans in Yugoslavia at the time as it disintegrated (Serbian-Croatian War, Bosnian War, Kosovo Problem, Macedonian-Greek name dispute?).[2]

The term *Voreios Epirus* (Northern Epirus), an exclusively Greek term refers to the region of southern Albania, in the Tosk-inhabited lands, that

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Greece tried to annex unsuccessfully in the years 1912–1920. It is used in contradistinction to a presumed Southern Epirus, the Epirus incorporated into Greece in 1913 by the Treaty of Bucharest.[3]

From 1913 until the 1990s there were three Greek views as to what constitutes Northern Epirus, from the most extreme to the more modest: (a) as way north as the Shkumbin River, including Vlora and Korca, a region covering almost 50 percent of Albanian territory and including eight of Albania's largest cities; (b) the middle position with the Ceraunian Mountains (in Albanian Malet e Vetëtimës, in Greek Akrokeravnia or Keravnia*)* as the northern limit, that is roughly one-sixth of Albanian territory[4]; and (c) the more down to earth line that places the limits to the very south, in which the Greek presence is overwhelming, especially in the so-called '99 Greek villages'.[5] As regards these regions three different approaches were followed by the Greek Government through the years, though the distinction is not always very clear: annexation by force or diplomatic means, autonomy, or minority rights to be scrupulously adhered by the Albanian authorities.

The years 1912–1914

In the course of the First Balkan War (October 1912–May 1913), the Greek Army under instructions from Premier Venizelos invaded Ottoman Albania and by March 1913 occupied ('liberated' according to the Greek rendition) all the region of southern Albania (Northern Epirus to the Greeks), but for Vlora due to Italy, which regarded its occupation by Greece a *casus belli* and threatened to occupy the city.[6]

With the war still raging on, a great power Conference of Ambassadors was convened in London to take stock of the situation in the Balkans, with British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey presiding, the ultimate aim being not to allow the Balkan conflict to escalate into a European War. There followed almost nine months of heated debates in the Conference.[7]

The six great power were divided into two groups, the Triple *Entente* comprised of Britain, France and Russia, and the Triple Alliance (or *Triplice*) of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. One of the main tasks of the Conference was to arrive at establishing the Albanian boundaries, to the north, west and south, with the last frontiers proving the most difficult to agree upon.[8] However, the great powers acted independently and not as a bloc, with Britain and Germany in particular in accord on several issues that arose, and Austria-Hungary and Italy occasionally at loggerheads, even though they were the main champions of the Albanians.[9]

At the first meeting of the Conference held on 17 December 1912, 'the ambassadors agreed in principle to the setting-up of a new political entity, Albania', which however was not to be an independent state but 'autonomous under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan' and 'neutral under the guarantee of the powers'.[10] This was done despite Albania's recent declaration of independence for it became apparent that there was no centre of

political power nor any dominant national leader, with Ismail Kemal hardly in control. Upon the departure of the Ottomans, local tribal leaders asserted themselves, which to the ambassadors appeared as an anarchic situation unlikely to change.[11]

At the London Conference even Austria-Hungary's representative, Ambassador Albert von Mensdorff, who followed a consistent pro-Albanian stance, conceded that Albania should be autonomous instead of independent, though he stressed that adequate territory be given to it so as to make it viable, placing Shkoder and even Janina under this new entity and was adamant about Serbia not having an opening in the Adriatic. Mensdorff was supported by Italy's Ambassador Guglielmo Imperiali and German Ambassador Karl Marx Lichnowsky. But Russia and France called for a smaller Albania, with Grey trying to bridge the differences. Russia's Ambassador Alexander Benckendorff insisted that north of the Shkumbin River the Serbs and Montenegrins predominated and the south of the river was Greek and in this was supported by the French Ambassador Paul Cambon, and both envisaged only a small coastal strip to form a Muslim Albanian state.[12]

Venizelos arrived at the London Conference and presented the Greek claims, which included the region up to the line of Himara and Lake Ochrid that is with the santzaks of Girokaster and Korca in Greece (the above middle position with the Ceraunian Mountains as the northern limit). Greece stated that on the basis of the Ottoman statistics two third of the inhabitants in the region claimed by Greece were Greeks, obviously regarding Greeks all the Orthodox Christian inhabitants irrespective of mother tongue, along the *Rum millet* concept; hence, that 'Northern Epirus, was 'Greek by religion, by sentiment, and by nationality'.[13] The Greek delegation claimed that in the region to be annexed by Greece (that is Southern Epirus and Northern Epirus) there were 316,651 Greeks, 154,413 Muslims and 5,104 Israelites and it proposed that the region opposite Corfu was to be demilitarised. As for Northern Epirus per se, there were 120,000 Greeks and 120,000 Albanians. The Greek delegation insisted that all the Albanian and Vlach Orthodox Christians of Northern Epirus, with some exceptions, had a 'crystallized Greek consciousness'.[14] The Greeks also made three other points: that Greeks of Albanian origin had been and continued to be loyal to the Greek state and had held high positions; that the Christian Albanians in particular would not desire to live in a Moslem-dominated independent Albania; and there were also economic reasons in favour of incorporating southern Albania (Northern Epirus) to Greece, for Epirus's links with the outside world did not lay through the Albanian towns of Vlora or Durres but through Janina and Thessaloniki, which were both now in Greek hands.[15]

Curiously the far-fetched Greek claims were not seen as such by all the participants, especially by those who were adverse to the demands of the two Adriatic great powers, Austria-Hungary and Italy, namely Russia and France. Both and especially France supported the Greek claims to the end prior to the final compromise.[16] Austria-Hungary and Italy were decidedly against

the Greek claims, with Italy threatening if need be, the use of armed violence, pointing out that the Orthodox Christians who did not have Greek as their mother tongue were obviously Albanians (or Vlachs), with the Greeks but a minority in the region.[17]

The Provisional Albanian Government in its memoranda to the London Conference (January 1913) asked from the Powers to grant to the Albanian state the following borders: in the north, the existing border with Montenegro, in the north-east, the greater part of Kosovo, including the towns of Peja, Mitrovica and Prishtina, in the west the Ottoman vilayet of Monastir, including Skopje and Monastir, in the south, the greater part of the province of Epirus, up to the town of Preveza. These territories requested amounted to a region twice the size of Albania as it was decided to be at the end by the great powers.[18]

Serbia for its part demanded an opening in the Adriatic and Kosovo which it had recently occupied; Montenegro sought Shkoder which it had occupied. Austria-Hungary regarded Shkoder, which after all was an Albanian city, as essential for Albania's viability and was decidedly opposed to the expansion of Serbia to the Adriatic and at the expense of Albanian territory.[19]

However, the main boundary problem which proved more difficult to settle was the southern border of Albania.[20] The Albanians were prepared to accept only a limited expansion of Greece, on the grounds that the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants were Albanians and moreover that Albania had to be large enough so as to be able to survive and develop.[21] The Greeks tried to remind the Albanians of the 1907 understanding between Ismail Kemal and Theotokis but to no avail.[22]

With the Treaty of London (30 May 1913), the Ottoman Empire accepted losing to the four Balkan states all of its European processions west of the Evros (Meric) River and the four Balkan victors conceded that the borders of Albania with them would be a matter to be decided by the great powers. In the Treaty Greece and the Ottoman Empire agreed that the fate of the Aegean Islands should be decided by the great powers. As for the islands occupied by the Greeks, no formal decision was taken, although it was generally understood that, with the exception of Tenedos and Imbros, they would be given to Greece, but no engagement was made with Greece at the time.[23]

Two months later, the ambassadors of the great powers switched their position from Albanian autonomy to independence, mainly due to the pressure of Austria-Hungary and Italy. With the London Protocol of 29 July 1913 Albania was to be an independent though neutral principality. But the final settlement of its northern and southern frontiers was left pending, to be resolved later by the European great power.[24]

Upon the proposal of Grey (with Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Berchtold reluctant, regarding it as a loss of time) an international commission undertook to investigate the region of southern Albania occupied at the time by Greece,[25] with a view to decide on the appropriate frontier. The

instructions to the commission members were that the main criterion should be 'ethnographic', namely the mother tongue, that is the language spoken at home in the family by the inhabitants and that they should not take into consideration petitions, plebiscites or other public manifestations aimed at interfering with the task of the commission.[26] The boundary commission was comprised of six experts of the six great powers.[27]

At ambassadorial level, Ambassador Cambon was strongly in favour of handing over to Greece a territory opposite the far north of Corfu, thereby giving Greece control of the Corfu Channel and he used strategic arguments and the need for the Christians not to be placed under a state whose majority was Muslim. The Italian and Austro-Hungary Ambassadors, Imperiali and Mensdorff were adamantly opposed and suggested a line south of Girokaster, Korca and Saranda and insisted that the Corfu Channel should remain neutral with the mainland going to Albania.[28]

Thus for the international commission, the greatest disagreements among the six experts arose as regards Girokaster and Korca as well as the 40 mile coastline opposite Corfu.[29] The commission arrived on the scene in early October 1913, but no sooner had it begun its work sharp differences of opinion arose between the Italian and Austro-Hungarian delegates on the one hand and on the other the French and Russian delegates, with the former seeking to advance Albanian interests and the latter supporting the Greek claims, with the German delegate slightly in favour of the former. The British expert, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Doughty-Wylie who served as chairman, played the role of mediator between the two positions.[30] In view of this, 'it was difficult to delimit the southern frontier, and still more difficult to drive the Greeks out of the occupied districts, while the future of the Aegean Islands was wholly uncertain'.[31]

The Greek occupying authorities were under instructions to do everything in their power to present to the commission the Christian inhabitants as enthusiastic supporters of union with Greece and thus 'to mislead' it and 'hamper its investigations'.[32] Greek flags were placed all over the region, petitions for union with Greece were handed to the members of the commission and there were parades of school children with Greek flags calling for uniting the region with 'motherland Greece' and houses of the Christians were painted in the blue and white of the Greek flag. Furthermore, the Albanians were ordered not to allow the commission's members to enter the homes, with various frivolous justifications, such as that according to existing customs women are not allowed to open their house to strangers when the men of the house are not present, and indeed most of the homes remained closed. More ominously a so-called 'Sacred Legion' were set up comprised of irregular troops shouting 'union or death' and terrorising the inhabitants.[33] Given these Greek antics, the commission was able to visit six villages in 58 days and interview only 14 people.[34] The commission, some of whose members happened to be knowledgeable in Albanian affairs, were hardly fooled

(despite the tendency of the French and Russian commissioners to continue to favour the Greek claims). They drew the necessary conclusions, informing their governments accordingly.[35]

Doughty-Wylie was able to reach a compromise between the two opposing sides, proposing a frontiers from Cape Stylos in the west coastline and finishing, though not definitely fixed, south of the Korca district as it met the Grammos Mountain of the Pindos Mountain range.[36] The commission members left for Florence, where in the Geographical Institute of Florence, with its many maps, they laid down the southern and south-eastern frontiers of Albania that ran in a general south-west and north-east direction from Phtelia, near Cape Stylos, to Lake Prespa, passing about 25 miles from Janina, Korca and Girokaster. This agreement on their part which amounted to a recommendation to the six great powers, was known as the Florence Protocol (20 December 1913). Venizelos objected but to no avail.[37]

The leverage used by the great powers, upon an initiative by Grey, after having gained the consent of Italy, was to persuade Venizelos to link the fate of the Greek islands in the Aegean occupied by Greece during the First Balkan War, with the fate of southern Albania, with Greece able to avail itself of only one of the two.[38] Under the circumstances, Venizelos, a quintessential realist, had little choice on the matter, having himself implied a link between them, in the sense of acquiring one or the other but not both and in the hope of also securing the Dodecanese islands from Italy.[39] He urged Grey, through the Athens pro-Greek British Ambassador Francis Elliot, to settle the Aegean and Epirote questions 'simultaneously and at once'.[40]

Thus the whole of southern Albania, the 'Northern Epirus' occupied by the Greek Army was given to Albania, with Chameria going to Greece with its overwhelming Albanian-speaking (Muslim and Orthodox Christian) population. Venizelos conceded, but faced the wrath of the Greek public, opposition parties, King Constantine and the various Greek Epirote organisations, which went as far as calling Venizelos's caving in, treasonous and accusing the great powers of 'blackmail'.[41]

In order to appraise the compliance of Venizelos, one needs to bear in mind five parameters: (1) as a result of the Second Balkan War, Greece's astounding increase (almost doubling its size), with Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire weakened, was seen as going too far with most of the great powers not wanting Greece to acquire such as dominant position, a development which would upset the balance of power in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean, especially from the perspective of Italy and Austria-Hungary and would jeopardise their interests and plans[42]; (2) Italy, which controlled the Dodecanese, came up with serious reservations about handing over all of the Aegean islands to Greece, save Imvros and Tenedos which remained Ottoman[43]; (3) in the Bucharest Conference, following the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria claimed the city of Kavala, which was given to Greece though with considerable difficulty; (4) the island of Thasos, which was vital for nearby

Kavala, was until the last moment in danger of remaining within the Ottoman Empire[44]; and (5) Romania had agitated regarding the Kutso-Vlachs of the Pindos Mountains and elsewhere in the western Macedonian part now under Greece, with the region possibly going to Albania,[45] with Venizelos securing it with difficulty after having promised Romania cultural, religious and linguistic autonomy, including opening schools in the Romanian language.[46]

Put in a nutshell, as a result of the Balkan Wars and good fortune Greece had bitten more than it could chew, thus it was in no position to acquire southern Albania, in view also of its unconvincing arguments. Probably the only possibility may have been a slight change of boundaries in its favour regarding the 99 villages with the payment of an amount as compensation to Albania (in fact Venizelos momentarily tried the latter but for a larger region).

In October 1913, there was an upsurge of violence in southern Albania, the main instigators being Greek paramilitary groups (several of them from Crete) that terrorised the Albanian inhabitants.[47] The London Conference called upon Greece to withdraw its army from Albania, making it clear that only with the withdrawal until the end of April at the latest, would the Aegean islands be annexed by Greece.[48]

Meanwhile the Epirote Greeks in Greece were in a war footing to frustrate the decision of the great powers, with the Epirote politician Georgios Christakis Zographos, a former Foreign Minister and at the time Governor General of Epirus, ready to embark for 'Northern Epirus' to take matter into his own hands, together with other Greek nationalists.[49] Venizelos tried to dissuade him by pointing out that his attempt was doomed to failure given the negative great power reaction, its lack of support by the Greek Government, with the whole affair ending up damaging Greek national interests.[50]

Venizelos sent an urgent telegram to the Greek authorities and Greek Army ordering them not to give any assistance whatsoever to Zographos or recognise any official capacity on his part.[51] Yet Zographos and other diehard Epirotes arrived in Girokaster from Corfu. At this juncture, Britain and Russia opted for the postponement of the departure of the Greek forces so as to avoid violence, to which Germany agreed, but not Italy and Austria-Hungary.[52]

On 17 February 1914 at Girokaster, the so-called 'Provisional Government of Northern Epirus' was set up, with Zographos as its president, Ambassador Alexander Karapanos as Foreign Minister and Army Minister a colonel named Doulis.[53] A Constitutive Assembly of the Provisional Government was convened, declaring, on 2 March 1914, the 'Autonomous Republic of Northern Epirus', raising the Greek flag though with a black double eagle in the middle. The Provisional Government controlled Girokaster, Himara, Delvina, Saranda, Permet and the surrounding villages. At the outset Zographos was intransigent, claiming that Greece was forced by the great powers to sacrifice Northern Epirus and that the Epirote people would not succumb to 'a barbaric people'.[54]

Venizelos who at that stage believed that 'the region was irretrievably lost to Greece', told the Greek Parliament to ignore the activities of Zographos.[55] Venizelos's opposition to the autonomists led to a heated debate in Parliament, with condemnation coming from most of the leaders of the opposition, with King Constantine also highly critical, but Venizelos stood firm. What is more than clear is that for Venizelos the highest priority was his 'Ionian vision' (for Greece to acquire the Asia Minor littoral) and for this he was prepared to sacrifice Greek expansion to the north, contrary to King Constantine whose priority was to the north, along the so-called 'spine of the Pindus Mountains', and Constantine even threatened to resign if Northern Epirus was not secured and to became the leader of a military expedition there.[56]

Note that at the time Venizelos's sincerity regarding his opposition to the Zographos initiative was put in doubt by several commentators who were of the view that the acts of the autonomists were secretly backed by Athens.[57] To the contrary Ambassador Elliot, the British envoy in Athens was of the view that Venizelos was sincere and did not play a double game.[58] Perhaps the truth is to be found somewhere in the middle: the autonomy venture had not been instigated or orchestrated by Greece, but Venizelos wanted to somehow keep the claim on the table, but realising that it was doomed he dissuaded from assisting it also fearing repercussions on the part of the great powers against other more vital Greek interests.[59]

The Albanian Government for its part regarded the autonomy intolerable and believed that there was unofficial Greek support to the autonomists,[60] but upon Italian insistence accepted to negotiate with the Provisional Government. The end result was the Corfu Protocol (17 May 1914) that envisaged a form of autonomy and minority rights (use of the Greek language, education in Greek).[61] Albania does not regard the Corfu Protocol valid for it was not ratified by the Albanian Parliament.

The summer of 1914 witnessed extended violence with Greek paramilitary groups on the offensive, who called for the union of Northern Epirus with Greece.[62]

The years 1914–1920

Upon the start of the First World War, Venizelos came up with a plan that would have led, he hoped, to the entry into the war with the Entente Cordiale of four Balkan states, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. He proposed that Romania avails itself of Transylvania (from Austria-Hungary), Serbia acquires Bosnia-Herzegovina (from Austria-Hungary) as well as northern Albania, Bulgaria a part of Serbian Macedonia and Greece Northern Epirus.[63] Venizelos tried to reach an agreement with Rome, for Italy to acquire Vlora and in exchange for Greece to acquire southern Albania.[64]

A few months after the start of the First World War the Greek Army reoccupied southern Albania. The Provisional Government of Zographos was

dissolved after having functioned for eight months (2 March–31 October) delivering the region to the Greek Army. The re-occupation was done with the use of violence against the Albanians, with atrocities and massacres.[65] However Greece chose to remain neutral in the Great War (and remained so until 1917), but the occupation was accepted by the Entente Cordiale, with Britain at the forefront convincing Italy to accept it as provisional and avail itself of Vlora.[66]

On 26 April 1915, the three *Entente* powers (Britain, France and Russia) signed a secret agreement in order to persuade Italy to join them. Accordingly, Italy was granted Vlora and the island of Sazan and was awarded a mandate in central Albania, as well as the Austrian territories of Trentino, Dalmatia and Istria. Greece was to avail itself of southern Albania, Serbia and Montenegro were to partition northern Albania, and there was to be only a small Albanian autonomous state in the central region.[67] Under the circumstances Venizelos felt that Northern Epirus was not after all 'irreversibly lost' to Greece and, as he stated in Parliament, that 'only colossal faults' could separate Northern Epirus from Greece, 'so confident was he that the temporary occupation would become permanent'.[68]

Zographos, who in the meantime had become Foreign Minister in the Dimitrios Gounaris Government that had succeeded Venizelos, proposed the entry of Greece to the war with the Entente, in exchange for southern Albania (Northern Epirus) and territory in the Asia Minor littoral, but Britain and France were non-committal, for they were not prepared to trust anyone but Venizelos whom they held in high esteem. The next Greek Government under Stephanos Skouloudis annexed southern Albania by decree, even though no agreement had been reached with the Entente, with Italy in particular furious.[69]

Italy after having occupied Vlora began to occupy parts of southern Albania. In the south the situation under the Greek Army had worsened with thousands of Albanians dying of hunger, for livestock and agricultural products were snatched from them and sent in great quantities to Greece. The Allies were fed up with the Greeks and decided that it was time to drive the Greek Army out of southern Albania. This was undertaken by the Italian Army, which momentarily took control even of Janina (now Ioannina in Greek), and stayed in southern Albania to protect the Albanians from possible Greek incursions by paramilitary groups.[70]

Albania although internationally recognised in 1913, saw its independence 'almost lost again in the turmoil' of the First World War, 'when Albania's Yugoslav, Greek, and Italian neighbors sought, through such varying stratagems as military occupation, diplomatic trade-offs, and the subsidization of internal mutinies' to partition Albania or to reduce it to 'the status of a protectorate'.[71] Thus at the close of the First World War Albania was 'in an extremely vulnerable and fragmented position, still threatened with partition' so that 'the postwar period looked likely to be as menacing and traumatic as the war had been'.[72]

Greece under Venizelos who had ousted King Constantine, entered the war in 1917 on the side of the Allies. At the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920), Venizelos, who was one of the stars of the Conference, 'energetically negotiated Greek claims, whilst Italy tried to obstruct almost all Greek demands on southern Albania by organizing and financing' armed bands and 'spreading anti-Greek propaganda'.[73] Italy could not tolerate Greece availing itself of the southern Albanian coastline which would have meant Greek control of the entrance to the Adriatic Sea.[74]

Venizelos came up with an array of claims, such as acquiring Western and Eastern Thrace, the Asia Minor littoral, as well as 'Northern Epirus'. The arguments regarding the latter were again, as in 1912–1913, ethnological, even though the Greek minority was small, though not ethnological in the strict sense, based on racial or linguistic criteria, but on 'national consciousness', which, Venizelos maintained, was 'thoroughly Greek', as regards all the Orthodox Christian inhabitants of the southern part of Albania (Northern Epirus). And he claimed that some 120,000 were Greeks far more than the Albanians. As in 1912–1913, he suggested that the way out was for the people to decide, by way of a referendum,[75] presented as the proper democratic way and one that conformed to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination.[76]

Britain and France initially supported the Greek claims, while the US seemed prepared to give some of the territory to Greece but not all of Northern Epirus, for instance Girokaster but not Korca. Momentarily, Venizelos reached an agreement with Italy (the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement) for either side to support their respective claims. The British and French Prime Ministers Lloyd George and Clemenceau, who trusted Venizelos and thought highly of him, were forthcoming. But President Woodrow Wilson 'obstinacy' saved the Albanians.[77] He was determined to resist the dismemberment of the country.[78] Apparently he had been convinced by the Albanian leaders who had contacted him to abide by the 1913 frontiers (Florence Protocol). And a fissure appeared in the British ranks, with Lloyd George as always an unflinching supporter of Venizelos, but others more circumspect, apparently due to the discovery of petroleum in Albania which Britain aiming at being a party in its exploitation.[79]

Given this turn of events, Venizelos abandoned the claim to southern Albania and decided, in the Treaty of Sèvres which was being negotiated, to throw all his weight on his Ionian vision, securing Smyrna/Izmir as well as Eastern Thrace which was not far from Constantinople/Istanbul.[80] He also made sure to mend Greece's fences with Albania, stating that he supported the establishment of a viable, peaceful and democratic Albania. The Albanian leaders were forthcoming, having been in the meantime able to eject the Italians from Vlora by armed force, thereby restoring their country's independence.[81] An international committee, which preoccupied itself with southern Albania, found that the Muslim and Christian communities were evenly numbered, some 113,000, and the Greek community comprised of 35,000–40,000, that is one-third of the Christian community.[82]

The aftermath

On 17 December 1920, Albania was accepted as a member-state of the League of Nations. On 9 November 1921, a Conference of Ambassadors of four powers (Britain, France, Italy and Japan) that was held in Paris confirmed the Albanian borders, in the south on the basis of the 1913 Florence Protocol, though there was a need for more accurate demarcation.[83]

The exact frontiers, especially those with Greece needed further clarification. As this point Fan Noli's presentation to the League of Nations on 25 September 1924, as Prime Minister of Albania, *à propos* of the demarcation, is worth mentioning at some length[84]:

> The question of the frontiers of Albania, which was already under discussion before the World War, eleven years ago, still awaits a final solution – a solution which has been postponed every winter until the following summer. Must we look forward to a further adjournment this coming winter – with all the conflicts and complications that it will bring in its train? … This torture has lasted too long; this undesired burden weighs too heavily upon a people which only wishes for peace.
>
> Allow me to give a short account of this tragedy … In 1913, after the Balkan Wars, the Conference of Ambassadors in London, after long and wearisome negotiations, traced upon the map the frontiers of Albania, leaving more Albanians outside the boundary of Albania than inside it. An International Commission was instructed to trace the frontier on the spot, and this Commission began its work in September, 1913 … In the following summer the World War disrupted the work of the Commission, and from 1914 until 1920 we could not count cither the winters or the summers which followed. We were too busy counting the invasions, counter-invasions, and the foreign military occupations which succeeded one another in a country which belonged to no one. Moreover, during this unhappy period, there was no question of defining Albania's frontiers, but only of abolishing Albania.
>
> The frontier question was taken up again in 1921 after the admission of Albania into the League of Nations – an event the importance of which it is impossible to exaggerate. In 1921 the situation was as follows: Almost all the territory assigned to Albania in 1913 was in the hands of the Albanians themselves, except for some twenty villages to the east of Korcha, constituting a neutral zone and occupied by Greeks, as well as a fairly extensive area from Lake Ochrida to Lake Skutari, occupied by the Serbs in accordance with a line of demarcation traced by the Allied troops during the Armistice. This line was a very elastic one. It had a spasmodic tendency to move westwards, and more than once reached the very suburbs of Tirana, the capital of Albania. The Albanians did not appreciate the movements of this vacillating line: hence the periodical frontier fighting and the intervention of the League of Nations.

Finally another Florence Protocol (27 January 1925) and a Final Act in Paris (30 July 1926) adopted by the representatives of Britain, France, Italy, Greece and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (as Yugoslavia was then called) put the final touches as regards the exact borders of Albania to the north, east and south.[85]

We will conclude by the dominant views of the two parties regarding the Greek-Albanian frontiers, which are the frontiers until today. Both regard them unjust and this perception has lingered on for decades and is engrained in the respective national narratives until recently, especially on the Albanian side.

For the Greeks in the 1920s, the culprits are the great powers, for they did not want to implement the principle of self-determination, which had it been applied, i.e. via a referendum, it is more than certain that the majority would have opted for union with Greece.[86] Clearly, the Greek claims were unconvincing and a carryover of the *Megali Idea* still very much alive at the Paris Peace Conference. With Albania's independence though truncated, especially regarding the east, the Northern Epirus claim was totally unrealistic. Yet such views persisted for decades, indeed for most of the twentieth century (see Chapters 10 and 13), even after the Great Idea was dead and buried as a result of the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe' of October 1922 (as it is called in the Greek national narrative), following defeat in 1922, in the 1919–1922 Greek-Turkish War.

The Albanians are haunted by what occurred in the years 1912–1920, with 'the predatory intentions' of their neighbours.[87] As regards Greece, with its army repeatedly invading the region, the use of violence and the many atrocities by paramilitary groups, the 'Provisional Government of Northern Epirus', the continued Greek claims to southern Albania, again in the Paris 1946 Peace Conference and with various pronouncements in the years 1945–1967 (see Chapter 10) and its suspect attitude in the first part of the 1990s (see Chapter 13), one can hardly regard the Albanians as hyperbolic in their recriminations against Greece.

Moreover it is claimed, not unjustifiably, that Albania paid a great price for its independence, making Albania the only independent nation-state in Europe with half of its overall population living outside the mother country in neighbouring states.[88] In 1998 the Albanian Academy of Sciences came out with a detailed publication regarding Albania's 'national question', pointing to the utter injustice of 'more than half of the Albanian territories' and 'half of the Albanian population' outside the national state in neighbouring countries.[89] But as more than one outside commentator has acidly put it: 'a price had nevertheless to be paid for the earlier Albanian tardiness in demanding independent statehood'.[90]

Clearly the Albanian and not the Greek national narrative is more convincing. And we would agree with Joseph Swire's conclusion, made in his seminal 1929 book, as regards Albania's overall frontiers, that '[t]he frontier eventually decided upon was a violation of every ethnical, historical,

economic, geographical, and, indeed, every relevant consideration'.[91] Why did this come about? One obvious reason was having been latecomers in nationalism, the other the lack of power and lack of unity among its political leadership when it was most needed. But perhaps above all it was a mixture of ill-conceived great power interests with a strong dose of ignorance of Albanian affairs,[92] which hardly tallied with a judicious implementation of the new principle of national self-determination, one of the main principles of the Paris Peace Conference.

Be this as it may the overall injustice against the Albanians was – and is – as regards its northern and eastern frontiers and not the southern frontiers with Greece, which are by comparison 'more equitable', having left at the time some 35,000 Greeks within Albania and a more or less equal number of Chams within Greece.[93] Moreover, the southern boundary was 'more satisfactory to both sides' for it also 'followed geographical features (rivers, the watershed and mountain peaks) in order to offer a more feasible boundary'.[94] And as for all the Greek clamouring for so-called Northern Epirus, which of course was not justified, the outcome was fair and just by any standard. And this happened to the position of Greece's allies in 1945–1946 when Greek tried to rekindle the Northern Epirus issue (see **Chapter 10**).

Notes

1 See Lambros Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides apo tin eisodo tous sto elliniko kratos mehri tin enarxi tou ellinoitalikou polemou (1913–1940)' [The Muslim Chams from Their Entry into the Greek State Until the Start of the Greek-Italian War (1913–1940)], doctoral dissertation, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (2009), 100.
2 James Pettifer, 'Albania, Greece and the Vorio Epirus Question', *The World Today* (August–September 1994), 147.
3 Efrosini Koliou, *H elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias, 1950–1967* [The Greek Minority in Albania, 1950–1967] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2018), 15; Leonidas Kallivretakis, 'I ellinikikoinotita tis Alvaniasapo tin skopia tis istorikis geographies kai dimographias' [The Greek Community of Albania from the Angle of Historical Geography and Demography], in Thanos Veremis, Theodore Couloumbis and Ilias Nikolakopoulos (eds.), *O ellinismos tis Alvanias* [The Hellenism of Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 25; K.Th. Efstatiades, 'To Alvanikon kai Voreioepirotikon Zitima kata tin arhiki afton fasi' [The Albanian and Northern Epirus Question in Its Early Phase'], *Epistimoniki Epeteris Panteiou A.S.P.E* (1949–1950), 741.
4 Koliou, *H elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias, 1950–1967*, 16.
5 Kallivretakis, 'I ellinikikoinotita tis Alvaniasapo tin skopia tis istorikis geographies kai dimographias', 29.
6 A.I. Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima: I istoria mias tragodias* [The Northern Epirus Question: The Story of a Tragedy] (Athens: IMXA, Militos), 31–4, 39–47, 54; Christina Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914* [Greek-Albanian Relations and the Northern Epirus Question during the Period 1907–1914] (Athens: Olkos, 1997), 214, 246; B. P. Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote (1912–1957)*

(Athens: Impremèrie J. Alevropoulos, 1958), 13–4; Ioannis S. Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', *Balkan Studies*, 50 (2015), 164.

7 Nicola C. Guy, 'Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests: The Albanian Boundary Commissions, 1878–1926', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34 (2008), 454.

8 Nicola C. Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers? Ethnography, Power Politics and the Delimitation of Albania, 1912 to 1914', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 5:1 (2005), 27, 30, 37.

9 See for details R. J. Crampton, *The Hollow Détente: Anglo-German Relations in the Balkans, 1911–1914* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1979), 75–174.

10 *Ibid*., 75, 112; Alfred Francis Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 174.

11 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 75.

12 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 164–8, 177, 198; Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 32; Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 69–70; Douglas Dakin, 'The Diplomacy of the Great Powers and the Balkan States 1908–1914', *Balkan Studies*, 3:2 (1962), 355, 358; Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania form its Origins to the Present Day* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 149–50; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 230, 239.

13 Joseph Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom* (New York, NY: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971) [1929], 163.

14 *Ibid*., 163, 165–6; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 239; Basil Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies: Ellada kai Albania ston 20o aiona* [Delicate Balances: Greece and Albania in the 20th Century] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1994), 69.

15 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 126.

16 Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oiellinoalvanikessheseiskai to VoreioepirotikoZitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 241; Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 32, 37, 40.

17 Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 68–70; Basil Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908–1914* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1976), 98; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oι ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 237–9, 252.

18 Artan Puto, 'The Idea of Nation during the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912)', doctoral thesis, European University Institute (Florence, 2010), 81.

19 Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 68, 70; Paulin Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania* (London: Hurst, 2003), 14–5.

20 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 151; T. Zavalani, 'Albanian Nationalism', in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer (eds.), *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1971), 73.

21 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 177; Paulin Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania* (London: Hurst, 2003), 14–5.

22 Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908–1914*, 99–100; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to VoreioepirotikoZitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 242–3; Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania*, 14.

23 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 208.

24 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 77; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 71; Puto, 'The Idea of Nation during the Albanian National Movement (1878–1912)', 80.

25 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 179; Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 38.

26 Guy, 'Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests', 456.

27 George B. Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', *Balkan Studies*, 11 (1970), 62; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 292, 327, 332; Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania*, 15; Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 200.
28 Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 37–8.
29 *Ibid*., 37.
30 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 208; Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 39–40.
31 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 209.
32 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of Kingdom*, 169, 170. See also Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 39.
33 Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 39; Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 169.
34 Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 38–9.
35 *Ibid*., 39–40; Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 168–71; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 398, 405, 418–20, 426; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 76.
36 Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 40.
37 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 209; Guy, 'Fixing the Frontiers?', 41; Guy, 'Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests', 460.
38 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 124–5; Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 198, 201.
39 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 134.
40 *Ibid*., 134; Guy, 'Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests', 460.
41 Dakin, 'The Diplomacy of the Great Powers and the Balkan States 1908–1914', 361, 371–2; Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', 165–6; Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 23–7; Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', 63; Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', 166; Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908–1914*, 106–7, 110, 119–20; Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 165–70, 217–57, 265.
42 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 124; Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', 166; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 278, 323.
43 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, 124; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 279.
44 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 201.
45 *Ibid*., 180, 200.
46 Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 287, 294, 324–6, 327–9, 331–2.
47 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 79–80.
48 Pribram, *Austria-Hungary and Great Britain, 1908–1914*, 209.
49 One of the ironies is that he was the son of the major Ottoman Albanian banker Christakis Zographos, who had participated in the committee on the Albanian alphabet in 1869–1870 (see Chapter 6).
50 Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 271–3; Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 30.
51 Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 273.
52 Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', 64; Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 30–1.
53 Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 30–1; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 84–5.

54 Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 31–3; Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 279.
55 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 80.
56 Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 393–4, 436; Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 51, 173–8, 280–1; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 80.
57 L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst & Co, 2000) [1958], 541.
58 Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908–1914*, 126–7.
59 Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 85; Pitouli-Kitsou, *Oi ellinoalvanikes scheseis kai to Voreioepirotiko Zitima kata tin periodo 1907–1914*, 443.
60 Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 541.
61 Kondis, *Greece and Albania, 1908–1914*, 130–2; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 88–9. Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 36–42; Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, 286–9; Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', 64.
62 Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', 66.
63 Constantine Svolopoulos, *I elliniki exoteriki politiki, 1900–1945* [Greek Foreign Policy, *1900–1945* (Athens: Vivliopolion tis Estias, 1992), 113.
64 Leon, 'Greece and the Albanian Question at the Outbreak of the First World War', 67.
65 Zavalani, 'Albanian Nationalism', 75; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 87, 89.
66 Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 45; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 100–1; Bernd J. Fischer, 'Italian Policy in Albania, 1894–1943', *Balkan Studies*, 26:1 (1985), 105.
67 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 87.
68 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 245. See also Tajar Zavalani, *History of Albania*, edited by Robert Elsie and Bejtullah Destani (Albanian Studies, Kindle Edition, 2015), 156–7; and Vickers, *The Albanians*, 89.
69 Svolopoulos, *I elliniki exoteriki politiki, 1900–1945*, 118; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 105; Papafloratos, 'The Italian Policy in Epirus (1861–1918)', 171
70 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 277; Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 45–8; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 91.
71 Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977), 357.
72 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 91.
73 *Ibid*., 91.
74 *Ibid*., 92.
75 Miranda Vickers has suggested that Venizelos was bluffing, for he must have been aware that such a referendum would not have gone Greece's way, but she presents no hard evidence for this claim of hers. See Vickers, *The Albanians*, 92. Greek diplomats close to Venizelos, suggest otherwise, that he was convinced of the success of the referendum, with not only the Orthodox Christian Albanians and Vlachs, but also the Bektashi Albanian Muslims opting for union with a modern and orderly state such as Greece, rather than to live in the chaotic ultra-traditionalist Albania. See e.g. Alexis A. Kyrou, 'Dio simiomata peri tou Voreioepirotikou' [Two Notes on the Northern Epirus Question], in *Eliniki exoteriki politiki* [Greek Foreign Policy] (Athens: Vivliopolion tis Estias, 1955), 255–6.
76 Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 120; Svolopoulos, *I elliniki exoteriki politiki, 1900–1945*, 142–3.
77 Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, 357.
78 Paul Lendvai, *Eagles in Cobwebs: Nationalism and Communism in the Balkans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1969), 179; Zavalani, *History of Albania*, 165.

79 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 302–9; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 92–3; Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, 51–4; Kondis, *Eveshtites isorropies*, 120–1; Svolopoulos, *I elliniki exoteriki politiki, 1900–1945*, 146–7; Kyrou, 'Dio simiomata peri tou Voreioepirotikou', 232–5.
80 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 288; Vickers, *The Albanians*, 93.
81 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 95; Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, 358.
82 Yianis Yianoulopoulos, *Oi ellinikes edafikes diekdikiseis sto Sinedrio Irinis ton Parision (1946) kai I proistoria tous* [The Greek Territorial Claims in the Paris Peace Conference (1946) and Their Prehistory], (forthcoming), chapter 2, 9–10.
83 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 100.
84 Quoted extensively in Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 439–40.
85 Elias G. Skoulidas, 'Sinehies kai asinehies stis ellino-alvanikes scheseis [Continuities and Discontinuities in Greek-Albanian Relations], in Conference *Sinehies, asinehies, rixeis ston elliniko kosmo (1204–2014)* [Continuities, Discontinuities, Fissures in the Greek World (1204–2014)] (Thessaloniki, 2–5 October 2014), 579.
86 Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote*, *passim*; Korantis, *To Voreioepirotiko Zitima*, *passim*.
87 Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, 358.
88 Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania from Its Origins to the Present Day*, 150–2; Ismail Kadaré, 'Préface', in Ibrahim Rugova, *La question du Kosovo. Entretiens avec Marie-François Allan et Xavier Galmiche* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 16.
89 Eleftheria K. Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece: The Chams of Epirus (1923–2000)* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2008), 217.
90 Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, 358.
91 Swire, *Albania – The Rise of a Kingdom*, 151.
92 Vickers, *The Albanians*, 97.
93 Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804–1920* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977), 232.
94 Guy, 'Linguistic Boundaries and Geopolitical Interests', 465.

10 Greek irredentism and Greek-Albanian relations

The 'Northern Epirus Question' (second phase, 1940–1971) and its aftermath

The years 1940–1946

For unfortunate Albania, the Second World War started five months earlier when Italian troops invaded the country on 7 April 1939.[1] The invasion in question 'had been prepared as part of fascist expansion under Benito Mussolini and had been directly and carefully planned by his son-in-law', Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano.[2] The Italian victory was swift, facing little opposition, apart from some resistance by the gendarmerie and street-fighting especially in Durres.[3] By 8 April, Italian troops had reached Tirana, and King Zog, his wife and his newly born son, fled over the mountains to Greece. Independent Albania ceased to exist and on 18 April 1939 Italian Ambassador Francesco Jacomoni, was appointed Viceroy of Albania and an Albanian Fascist Party (*Partia Fashiste Shqiptare*) was set up by the Italians.[4]

From April 1939 to July 1940, Mussolini had not favoured invading Greece. As he had put it 'Greece is a bare bone, and is not worth the loss of a single Sardinian grenadier.'[5] When the Second World War started on 1 September 1939, the Italian dictator was keen for Italy to be part of various glorious military campaigns, such as the invasion of France and invading Egypt from Italian Libya. But Ciano did his best to persuade Mussolini otherwise, that attacking Greece was worthwhile and a target for 'easy glory',[6] and at the end, on 10 August 1940, he succeeded in persuading the Duce.[7]

From that day onwards, Mussolini came to accept the Greek venture as necessary so as to establish Italy as real great power and true empire, and achieve parity with Hitler's Germany (Hitler tended to treat him as a junior partner). On 15 October 1940, the die was cast at a meeting of Mussolini with the main military commanders and Ciano. Most of the military, notably the Chief of Staff, General Pietro Badoglio, had reservations, mainly as regard the timing (due to lack of adequate preparation) but not the operation as such. But Mussolini would not budge and it was decided for the attack against Greece to take place on 28 October, with the whole operation regarded by Mussolini and Ciano as a mere 'walkover' or 'military parade'.[8] It was also discussed to use Albanian troops in the attack. Hitler for his part had been decidedly against any such venture (his main focus being on how

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best and when to invade the Soviet Union, 'Operation Barbarossa') and was officially informed of the invasion of Greece by Mussolini as late as 28 October, much to his anger.[9]

As scheduled Italy launched its attack against Greece on 28 October 1940 from occupied Albania. Yet surprisingly barely 18 days later, from 14 November 1940 onwards, the Greek Army was able to repel the Italians, with an impressive counter-attack headed by Field Marshal Alexandros Papagos. In the course of its northern advancement the Greek Army occupied Girokaster, Leskovik, Korca and Pogradec, that is almost the whole of southern Albania, apart from Vlora and Berat. This was the third time in 30 years that the Greeks occupied southern Albania ('liberated Northern Epirus' according to Greek parlance), bringing memories of the 1910s and whetting the appetite of nationalist circles in Greece. The Greco-Italian War lasted for almost six months, until 23 April 1941, when the Greek Army surrendered to the German Army that invaded Greece on 6 April.

Before proceeding further a delicate matter needs to be addressed, for it had repercussions later and has left its imprint in Greece until today: the participation of Albanians in the attack under the Italian Army. Apparently prior to the reference in the 15 October meeting in Rome under Mussolini on Albanian participation, 5280 Albanians had been mobilised by Jacomini in April 1940, and he had stated that he could ensure the mobilisation of a further 7,000. Thus it seems that in the attack against Greece, there were available some 12,000 Albanian soldiers, but it is well established that 3,100 of them deserted and did not take part in the attack against Greece.[10] Note that on 9 July 1940, the Italian King Victor Emmanuel issued a royal decree according to which he announced the obligation of Albania to fight with all those countries with which the Kingdom of Italy would enter into war.[11]

But now let us move elsewhere, to the level of diplomacy. During the Second World War, the exiled Greek Government raised the so-called Northern Epirus Question on several occasions with the British Foreign Office and with the US State Department. These Greek initiatives were not well received in London, but for good measure the Foreign Office asked the famous historian Arnold Toynbee, then head of the prestigious Royal Institute of International Affairs, to examine the matter of the Greek-Albanian borders. Toynbee's conclusion was that the Florence line of 1913 was the best possible that had been achieved and no change was needed.[12]

Premier Georgios Papandreou, upon arriving on Greek soil, in his liberation speech to the Greek people (18 October 1944) referred to two Greek claims, the Dodecanese and Northern Epirus, but not Cyprus for it had been decided to follow the traditional Venizelos approach of resolving the issue quietly with Britain.[13]

One of the main thrusts of the Greek argumentation in claiming southern Albania, apart from ethnological line, which although mistaken, was still used, was a strategic argument, that Greece needed borders to the north of Albania, so as to be in a better position to defend itself than it had been in

1940–1941. This was stated by Ambassador Panayiotis Pipinelis, who had close links with British diplomats, in a letter to the Foreign Office. The matter was referred to the British post-war planning committee which consisted of high ranking military. Its final assessment was that the huge mountain ranges in the existing border line between Greece and Albania were the best possible guarantee for adequate defence from the north as had been proven by the successful repelling of the Italian Army in 1940.[14] A similar conclusion was reached by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff when asked by the State Department, adding that the loss of territory by Albania could make it more dependent on Yugoslavia, at the risk of being absorbed by it larger neighbour.[15]

However, on the eve of the 1946 Paris Peace Conference, British and US officials exchanged views about how to deal with communist Albania and Britain seemed to toy with the idea of a curtailed Albania, with perhaps a substantial part going to Greece.[16]

Towards the end of November 1944, when Albania was liberated, Enver Hoxha in his first speech to the Albanian people at a mass rally in Tirana (28 November) stated: 'We have fought and bled together with the neighbouring Greek people. We have bandaged each other's wounds in this common anti-fascist war, and it is our desire to be always on good terms with this generous people'.[17] He referred to the plight of the Chams in Greece in the hands of the bands under Zervas, who had driven them out of Greece (see Chapter 12) adding that 'Reactionary Greek circles have presented claims to annex our regions of Gjirokastra and Korça, or as they like to call them "Vorio Epirus"'.[18]

In 1945–1946, prior to the Paris Peace Conference the Greek claims were the southern part of Albania, annexing of south-western Bulgarian, rectifying the Greek-Yugoslav border, the Dodecanese and Cyprus.[19] The broad consensus reached from the days of the occupation until 1946 was that 'the sorely tried nation was entitled to realize at least part of its historical "rights"', in view of its recent 'epic struggle' against 'two mighty empires' and what 'little Greece' had 'suffered for the sake of the allied cause'; it was thus entitled to 'territorial aggrandizement', not so much as a 'reward' but as an act of 'justice', as 'the restitution of what was rightly hers from time immemorial'.[20] As Papandreou had put it as head of the opposition: the entire Greek nation had offered 'a holocaust to the alter of the common allied struggle' and now '[t]he ages' demanded the complete vindication of 'our just, inalienable and sacred national claims'.[21]

The Northern Epirus lobby in Greece sprang into action, headed by Metropolitan Panteleimon of Girokaster, who 'castigated the alleged benevolence of Greece's wartime allies' towards 'lifeless people, pitiful parasites and barbaric remnants of time and History', referring to Albania as 'that unclean relic of Sultanic rule in the midst of Europe'.[22] In March 1946, he headed a five-person committee which presented its case to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Following the meeting, the Committee adopted a resolution calling upon the future Paris Peace Conference to hand over Northern Epirus and the Dodecanese to Greece.[23]

The Greek claims at the Paris Peace Conference and the Albanian reaction

On the eve of the Paris Conference, the first post-war elected Greek Government, under Konstantinos Tsaldaris settled for three claims, which were said to be 'the minimum of Greece's legitimate demands' considering her historical rights, her war record and promises given by her 'great allies' during the war.[24] The claims were Northern Epirus, the Dodecanese and a readjustment of the Greek-Bulgarian border. The Northern Epirus claim was treated as 'self-evident' as an obvious case of 'self-determination'. As for Cyprus, it was to be settled later on a bilateral basis with 'our great friend, Great Britain'.[25]

At the Paris Peace Conference (1946), Greece was represented by a large delegation of politicians and diplomats, some 30 members, under Premier Tsaldaris, with mainly Deputy Foreign Minister Philippos Dragoumis and Ambassador Pipinelis in charge of articulating the Greek claims. Dragoumis had presented these claims prior to the main conference in the Committee of Foreign Ministers (April 1946) and in May requested the support of the British and US Foreign Ministers, with the argument that this would be to their interest in dealing with communist Albania.[26]

Greece believed that Britain and the US were not adverse to the Greek claims,[27] although London and Washington had forewarned Athens that its position was not very convincing, with Washington in particular not prepared to have to cope with additional disputes with Moscow.[28] But Athens went ahead regardless, an additional reason being its fear that Albania was about to be united with Yugoslavia, and pointed out to the British that such an eventuality made the revision of the Greek-Albanian frontiers northward to Greece's benefit necessary for the 'Slavs' to be driven away from the Corfu Channel.[29]

Tsaldaris at the plenary session of the Paris Peace Conference (3 August 1946) invoked historical, ethnographic and geostrategic arguments (basically safe borders) to claim that the region as far to the north as the Shkumbin River have always been Greek since antiquity and formed part and parcel of Greece space. He also referred to the achievements of the Greek Army against the Italians claiming that the Albanians had collaborated with the Axis powers and with Italy's aggression, hence Albania was an aggressor. He also spoke in terms of 'a historical injustice' committed by the great powers in 1913, when under the pressure of Austria-Hungary and Italy they delivered a region whose majority were Greeks to the new Albanian state.[30]

Albania not unjustifiably perceived the Greek territorial claims 'as a serious threat to Albania's independence and territorial integrity'.[31] Hoxha, who headed the Albanian delegation replied (21 August)[32]:

> Mr Tsaldaris tries to prove that Albania is not an allied country, that Albania attacked Greece, and consequently, is in a state of war with Greece. On the other hand, Mr Tsaldaris lays claim to Southern Albania,

> pretending that it is Greek territory and belongs by right to Greece … The Albanian people contemptuously reject the vile accusation of the Greek delegate, who labels my country an aggressor. The Albanian people have never attacked the honest Greek people, and have never declared war on them. On the contrary, they sympathized with their cause, which was also the cause of the Albanian people, since both nations had suffered the same fate and had to deal with the same enemy.

He briefly referred to the plight of the Chams at the hands of Zervas's bands, and reacted to the Greek claim that Albania is 'pursuing a policy of denationalizing the Greek minority in Albania', as follows[3334]:

> the Greek minority in Albania fought shoulder to shoulder with all the Albanian people against the fascist and nazi occupiers, and against the Albanian and Greek quislings. Today in the People's Republic of Albania it enjoys equal rights with the Albanian population. It has 79 seven-year schools and one secondary school in the Greek language, has its own autonomous local administration, just like the Albanian population, and sends representatives to the People's Assembly.

And Hoxha concluded[35]:

> But the real aim of all these allegations by the Greek delegate is to take two regions from Albania, those of Korça and Gjirokastra, which have always been among the most ardent centres of Albanian patriotism … These aims reflect the old "megali idhea" policy, that is to say, of Greek imperialist expansion over the entire Balkan region, an idea which has also germinated in the heads of the present Greek rulers. In fact, these people, with their claims on Albania, their daily provocations on our borders, and their intrigues … are trying to disturb the peace in the Balkans… we consider it to be out of place and unacceptable for this Conference to examine the question of the territorial integrity of Albania.

The Soviet delegation under Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and the Yugoslavian delegation headed by Moša Pijade (an eminent intellectual) were adamantly opposed to any change of borders, with Molotov in particular accusing Greece of following an aggressive policy towards its northern neighbours and of threatening peace in the Balkans.[36]

In Paris, there was a common Yugoslavian-Bulgaria line regarding the attempts of Greece to changes in the Greek-Bulgarian border, with Bulgaria claiming Western Thrace which had been Bulgarian in the years 1913–1918. Pijade told the Conference that Tsaldaris had approached him with a proposal to split Albania between Greece and Yugoslavia.[37] Tsaldaris reacted angrily, accusing the Yugoslav delegate of deception, calling his claims 'phantasmagorical'.[38]

Pijade then stated that Yugoslavia would defend Albania should any state impinge upon its territorial integrity. The British representative tried to defend the Greek position and the Greeks left the session as sign of protest.[39]

At the end, the Paris Peace Conference accepted only one Greek claim, the Dodecanese islands. The non-acceptance of the Greek claim to southern Albania was due not only to the weakness of the Greek argumentation but also to the following reasons: (a) the firm opposition of the Soviet Union, with Albania firmly within the communist orbit; (b) the US, Britain and France did not want to risk a rupture with the Soviet Union on a matter which was hardly a priority to the West; and (c) due to the final assessment of the US and Britain and of other Western states that if Albania was to lose what amounted to a third of its territory, it would be weak defence-wise and unable to have the necessary productive sources to survive intact.[40]

The result of the peace settlement was 'a bitter blow for the Greek public which had been led to expect a much more positive outcome. Feelings ranging from neglect to betrayal' with Papandreou summoning up the overall Greek mood in Parliament: there is 'deep grief for the fate of our national rights', adding that the 'sacrifices and services' of Greece 'had been so great and her "sacred demands" so small that the nation was entitled to expect their "unanimous and unreserved recognition."'[41]

1947–1954: relations at the nadir and the British-US anti-Albanian operation

Greek-Albanian relations were further complicated by the support of Albania to the Greek communists during the Greek Civil War and by the persistence of Greek Governments in claiming Northern Epirus even after the Paris Conference.[42] An early episode of the Greek Civil War is regarded the Corfu Channel Incident between Britain and Albania,[43] which however did not involve Greece directly (it led to the first case before the new International Court of Justice, with important repercussions for the international law of the sea, especially as regards innocent passages through straits).[44]

Communist Albania had offered some tangible support and safe haven to the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE: *Demokratikos Stratos tis Elladas*) of the Greek communists, although the bulk of the aid and safe haven came from Tito's Yugoslavia and Dimitrov's Bulgaria.[45] But in the wake of the famous Tito-Stalin split of March–June 1948, Moscow did not allow Bulgaria to continue providing supplies, and thus the Greek communists were left mainly with Yugoslavia's aid and with the more limited Albanian one. But when Tito finally decided to close the Yugoslav-Greek border (July 1949), the DSE could use only the Albanian border territories, which was a poor substitute.[46]

On 2 August 1949, the Greek Army, in pursuit of the retreating DSE, entered Albanian territory within some 13 kilometres and a brief armed clash

ensued between the Albanian and Greek forces, with about a dozen to 20 killed and wounded.[47] Following the defeat of the DSE a few months later, in October 1949, Albania allowed the remnants of the DSE to find refuge in its territory.

In November 1949, the Albanian Foreign Minister Mihal Prifti reported to the UN General Assembly that from November 1944 until September 1949 Greece had committed no less than 1565 provocative acts in the Albanian-Greek border.[48] The standard Greek reaction was that after all it did not recognise the existing borders with Albania.[49] Greece did not lift the state of war with Albania and the atmosphere in Greece as Tsaldaris put it to a US official, had assumed 'the proportions of a national problem' and any Greek Government that appeared to regard the existing Greek-Albanian border as permanent 'would fall the next day'.[50]

Earlier, in the first months of 1949, with the Greek Civil War raging on, 'the Greek leaders did consider an invasion of Albania' but 'were restrained by the Americans and the British' who 'intended to try their own hand against the Hoxha regime'.[51] This calls for some elaboration for it was regarded well into the 1980s as 'the best guarded secret of the Cold War'.[52]

In 1948–1949, the US and Britain had planned to overthrow the Albanian communist regime and to do so by the intrusion of a small number of Albanians (after training them) in regions considered anti-regime in Albania, where they were to set up anti-communist groups destabilising the country and end up by overthrowing the communists by a popular uprising. The British and the Americans perceived the operation that was to take place in 'the smallest and weakest link in the Soviet bloc',[53] a child's play. The Foreign Office regarded Albania 'a weak regional pariah' that was 'especially susceptible to unconventional warfare',[54] while a CIA's study of Albania (dated 15 December 1949) had reached the conclusion that 90 per cent of the Albanian population was opposed to the Hoxha regime.[55]

The anti-Albanian operation was dubbed VALUABLE by the British and FIEND by the Americans, and functioned within a new evolving US strategy named 'rollback'.[56] Rollback appears to have substituted George Kennan's well-known 'containment' approach of July 1947, namely that 'the main element of any United States policy must be that of a long term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies', cautioning that 'such a policy has nothing to do with outwards histrionics: with threats of blustering or superfluous gestures of "toughness"'.[57]

Apparently for the American hard-liners then on the rise, containment was seen as pusillanimous. As put by Peter Grose,[58]

> as containment was being scorned as appeasement and timidity in the first months of 1948, a high-level staff within the State Department was devising a remarkable initiative to confront communism aggressively through clandestine action. The secret program would start with

innocuous propaganda and persuasion, then proceed directly into sabotage, subversion, and paramilitary engagement.

But when the 'diplomatic archives were finally unsealed, they revealed the architect and champion of American covert action against east European communism to be' none other than the architect of containment, George Kennan.[59] In 1947, Kennan headed the newly formed Policy Planning Staff, the State Department's internal think tank, set up by Foreign Secretary George Marshall, who trusted Kennan and sought his advice.[60]

The Truman administration gave its approval to the concept of 'political warfare' that included 'rollback action' on 18 June 1948 (National Security Council Directive 10/2) to which the CIA 'eagerly responded'.[61] At operational level in charge of CIA's covert operations was the innocuously called 'Office of Policy Coordination'.[62] In Britain, the official go-ahead for the Albanian operation was given by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin towards the end of 1948, following the advice of diplomats and of Major General Stewart Menzies, the chief of SIS (Secret Intelligence Service, commonly known as MI6).[63] A little later in February 1949, Bevin approved a plan for a sea landing of saboteurs in Albania's Adriatic coast.[64] At joint British-US level, the official green light to go ahead was probably taken in September 1949 by Foreign Secretaries Ernest Bevin and Dean Acheson.[65] As confided by the British planners to their American counterparts, the Albanian operation was to function as 'a clinical experiment to see whether larger rollback operations would be feasible elsewhere'.[66]

The overall approach adopted by 'responsible British authorities', well before the US concept of 'political warfare' had taken shape, was 'to liberate the countries within the Soviet orbit short of war'.[67] Apparently, the idea of detaching Albania from the Soviet orbit originated from the 'Russia Committee' of the Foreign Office, the interdepartmental body in charge of managing Britain's anti-Soviet efforts.[68]

Under VALUABLE/FIEND some ten missions were sent to Albanian soil from late 1948 until May 1953 (the last mission) organised by the British SIS in cooperation with CIA's Office of Policy Coordination. It was the British who took the lead in the project because of their previous deep involvement in Albania and the Balkans during the Second World War.[69]

The British and Americans recruited and funded anti-regime Albanians residing abroad. There were three main groups from which recruitment could be made, which, however, were at loggerheads with each other: the supporters of the exiled King Zog (then in Alexandria) and his military commanders; the anti-royalists of Balli Kombëtar (National Front) under Mid'hat Frashëri (who had set up in Paris a committee known as 'The Albanian Committee for Freedom') and his associates; and the Catholic Italo-Albanians known as National Independents. And there were also exiles from Kosovo and a group under Ihsan Toptani in London.[70]

Apart from Britain and the US, others involved in the project were Malta, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Greece. Greece's role was crucial, being Albania's neighbour, without which the operation would have been impossible to launch. Greece ended up becoming the administrative centre of VALUABLE/FIEND, where many contacts were made for the forthcoming operation. It provided special venues for training in unorthodox warfare, monitoring of radio signals (this was done by the SIS operatives in Corfu), providing for equipment, propaganda material and so on. And all the flights to Albania were from Greek airfields.[71]

However, the involvement of Greece was a cause of concern for the British and US officials for two reasons: one was that Greece's agenda was very different from the one of its allies, which of course was to bring about via clandestine operations a free and democratic Albania tied to the West. The aim of Athens was none other than to further its Northern Epirus project, basically to be in a better position to annex Northern Epirus. The British were at pains to convince the Greek leaders and diplomats that such a line was counter-productive, and that 'if there was one thing guaranteed to frustrate any effort to remove Hoxha's regime, even to make Hoxha popular, it was the idea that the West was plotting with Greece to deprive Albania of 20 percent of her territory, perhaps even to partition the country between Greece and Yugoslavia'.[72] The Greek officials went along reluctantly, with their hearts hardly into it.[73] To this differing agenda was added the lack of professionalism on the part of the amateurish Greek secret services and at times irresponsibility and incompetence, which led to many episodes, some of them comical, that infuriated the Americans, exasperated the British and left their Albanian associates speechless.[74]

Albanian recruits trained by the British in Malta and Greece were sent by sea to the Adriatic coastline (by a 43-ton landing ship named *Stormie Seas*, which the British had commissioned Greek shipbuilders to construct for the occasion),[75] and by land and air from Greece (being parachuted in the latter phase of the operation). But surprisingly the Albanian Government was not taken by surprise. Apparently it was 'well aware, if not of precise dates and landing places, certainly of the operation's general timing and location' and 'the security forces had ordered everyone, especially shepherds on the hillsides who were likely to see travelers on foot, to report anything suspicious'.[76] Thus all ten attempts at intrusion from September 1949 to May 1953 failed, 'with mishaps on the ground even before they took off',[77] with those involved either fleeing to safety, killed on the spot or arrested and then tried and sentenced to death or to serve long prison sentences.[78]

The obvious question to ask is why this abject failure? There are two main theories and a possible third one.[79]

As regards the first explanation, it was the doing of 'moles' (double agents), duly informing their Soviet bosses, who then warned the Albanians, and the main names that crop up are those of Harold (Kim) Philby and Donald Maclean. Both were in MI6 and were well aware of rollback. Nicholas Bethel, Peter Grose and others are convinced that Philby is the culprit and

base their view on the fact that Philby, while in London and then in Washington, is known to have heard about the Albanian operation, and there is also Philby's own admission when he defected to Moscow in the 1960s and wrote his KGB-doctored memoirs titled *My Silent War*.[80] Grose regards Maclean, who like Philby, was a double agent for the Soviets, as probably responsible for the leak regarding the overall rollback project (despite the secrecy of National Security Council Directive 10/2).[81] Other possible leaks may have been from the Albanian community in Italy, especially the émigrés in Rome (they were a prime source of Soviet intelligence) and the Italian communists may also have got wind of it (with the Italian Communist Party the second largest party in Italy).[82] Moreover there had been some 'loose talk' regarding rollback among members of 'the newly invigorated conservative circles of Washington', which 'Soviet listening posts' in the US would 'have had no difficulty in picking up'.[83]

According to communist Albania, no double agent played any role whatsoever. The outcome was solely due to the competence and vigilance of *Sigurimi* (the formidable state security organisation which boasted to have agents even in the Vatican), which was able to secure beforehand all the necessary information so as to foil all the vile attempts at intrusion.[84] It is a fact that Sigurimi had been on the alert following the end of the Greek Civil War, not least because in those days Greek and foreign newspapers referred to the possibility of the victorious Greek Army entering Albania.[85] Athens had in April 1949 (seven months prior to the Greek communists' collapse) sent a memorandum to its Western allies on the need for an operation to pursue the Greek guerillas in Albanian soil, which the US rejected given the anticipated Soviet reaction.[86] In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the threat to Albania had made Stalin summon the Greek communist leader Nicos Zahariades to Moscow ordering him to end all operations immediately so as not to endanger Albania.[87]

Nigel West (pen name of a former Conservative MP) who has written several well-informed books on intelligence operations and on the SIS, has argued that the double spy interpretation is erroneous: the Albanians on the alert had anticipated the first entries and having arrested those involved, interrogated them and got wind what was going on in considerable detail. And if there had been any contribution by, say, Philby, this may have been with regard to the second phase, the flights from Greece.[88] And West offers a third possible explanation for the failure: 'the reality is that SIS's postwar planners underestimated the determination of the Albanians to defend themselves, and even a despotic government, from external interference'.[89]

The whole affair, in addition to the immediately previous Albanian support to the communists in the Greek Civil War, brought the relations between Albania and Greece to their worst point from 1945 until today. Hoxha for his part made sure to emphasise that the object of the operation was not only to overthrow Albania's legitimate regime but to dismember the country and that was sought by Greece as well as Italy (later he also mentioned Yugoslavia).[90]

1949–1960: the Greek stance and the Albanian reaction

In the 1950s and until 1967 Greek foreign policy towards Albania vacillated between 'irredentism and pragmatism'.[91] In the years following the end of the Greek Civil War, Greek officials rarely missed an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the 'Panhellenic desire' for 'the liberation of Northern Epirus', adding, however, 'their intention to pursue it by peaceful means'.[92]

In April 1952, Deputy Foreign Minister Evangelos Averoff told the Turks, in the course of Greek-Turkish talks, that there were several reasons[93]

> why Albania had to survive as an independent state: to avoid the enlargement of Yugoslavia to the point that it would be uncontrollable; to prevent the control of the eastern coast of the Adriatic by a single power; and even to prevent a strong Italian reaction to such a Yugoslav operation.

In the summer of 1952 Defence Minister, Georgios Mavros, made similar remarks to the Americans.[94]

On 26 August 1952, a meeting has held at the Foreign Ministry under Averoff in which various contingency plans were broached: (1) a NATO occupation of Albania with Greek participation; (2) an agreement with Yugoslavia to dismember Albania between the two of them, which would inevitably have to take into consideration Italy's views; (3) the Greek occupation of Northern Epirus in case of a wider war or other opportunity; and (4) the overthrow of the Albanian regime. But it was decided that Greece would pursue the matter of Northern Epirus only by peaceful means and whenever the occasion arose.[95]

In December 1952, Prime Minister Alexandros Papagos (the former Field Marshal) stated that his Government would like to stress that it rejects any use of violence and it will pursue its aims regarding the Northern Epirus affair only peacefully.[96]

In the early 1950s, the Greek authorities had realised that the international climate was not conducive to the stirring of the Northern Epirus issue. Thus the affair was relegated to the private domain, to the various existing Northern Epirus organisations that happened to enjoy the sympathy of the American agencies.[97] There were various Northern Epirote organisations active in Greece, whose numbers tended to rise through the years. The most important one by far was KEVA (*Kentriki Epitropi Voreioepirotikou Agonos*: Central Committee of the Northern Epirote Struggle), which had been set up in 1943 during the German occupation and functioned as the central coordinating body of all the Northern Epirus organisations in Greece, save one named Selasforos that retained its independence. KEVA which was based in Athens had regional committees in Ioannina, Corfu, Thessaloniki and Patras. It was headed by Metropolitan Panteleimon as president until his death in 1969.[98]

Greek-Albanian relations became less frosty following the death of Stalin (March 1953), though diplomatic relations were not resumed for Greece did not alter its position regarding the need for change of frontiers and still held to the state of war regime. However, Northern Epirus as a 'Greek national issue' was overshadowed, from 1954 onwards by the campaign for 'Enosis' that is the union of Cyprus with Greece, which had led Greece to a collision course with Britain as well as Turkey. But in various rallies and other demonstrations for Cyprus, Northern Epirus was occasionally mentioned. In lieu of example when Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus was released from his exile in the Seychelles and arrived in Athens (April 1957) he was greeted by Panteleimon. Papandreou, when in opposition in the 1950s referred repeatedly to the 'liberation of Northern Epirus' as one Greece's main 'national issues', and criticised the Konstantinos Karamanlis Government (second part of the 1950s) for neglecting the issue in favour of the Cyprus cause.[99]

In early 1953, the Greek Foreign Ministry toyed with the idea of resuming diplomatic relations with Albania, but its view did not prevail due to Premier Papagos who was adverse for two main reasons: King Pavlos and his entourage remained wedded to the Northern Epirus issue and Papagos, who was not in good term with the Palace did not want to pick a fight with the King; moreover he was wedded to the Northern Epirus affair, being reluctant to abandon a region 'liberated by the Greek Army' under his command in 1940–1941.[100]

In May 1953, a Greek memorandum to the US reiterated the claim to Northern Epirus through peaceful means, stating that Athens wished for the emergence of an independent and friendly Albania, specifying however that 'not all non-Communist governments in Tirana would be considered as friendly to Athens'; they would be regarded as 'friendly' only if they 'recognized the existing international obligations' towards the Greeks of Northern Epirus, 'namely the autonomy status agreed in 1913'.[101]

In the 1950s and 1960s, Albania sought normalising relations but Greece had cold feet.[102] This indicates that Greece had not abandoned the claim to Northern Epirus, even though it was downplayed, in view of the unfavourable international climate and the Cyprus priority.

In the summer of 1953, the Albanian Government proposed to Greece, through the UN, 'the re-establishment of the frontier pyramids marking the border between the two states', but the Greek response was negative, claiming that the two states were 'in a state of war, and that the Albanian General Staff should communicate with the Greek one, asking for the conclusion of a Peace Treaty'.[103]

In 1954, the Greek-Albanian climate reached a new low point, with the Bled Agreement among Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, which Albania did not regard as a *bona fide* defence alliance, but as an anti-Soviet alliance aimed at Albania and Bulgaria.[104] Yet despite this occurrence, the Albanian Foreign Minister Behar Shtylla instructed the Albanian ambassadors in Paris and

Moscow to get in touch with their Greek counterparts with the aim of normalising relations. And a meeting took place in September 1954 between the Albanian and Greek ambassadors in Moscow, but nothing came of it. The Greek side was not prepared to lift the state of war, which the Albanian side interpreted as wanting to keep the Northern Epirus issue on the table. A little later the Albanian Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu asked his Czech counterpart to mediate for Greek-Albanian talks to ensue, but nothing came of it.[105]

In June 1955, Shtylla sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, asking him to inform the Greek Government that Albania suggests the renewal of diplomatic relations, but rejects the Greek insistence on retaining the status of war between the two countries.[106]

The Greek response, via Hammarskjold, was surprisingly detailed. Athens played the blame game, by accusing Tirana of the following: the participation of Albania in the attack of fascist Italy against Greece in 1940; the hostile attitude of Albania in the years 1946–1949 with its systematic assistance to the DSE; the continued persecutions suffered by the Greek people in Albania; the retention of Greek officers and soldiers in Albania that had been captured by the DSE; and the infiltration from Albania of communist agents aimed at conspiring against the free democratic institutions of the country. The Greek reply concluded that at the moment the situation was not germane to a renewal of diplomatic relations, but this could come at a later date, if there was a more favourable climate.[107]

In July 1955, Albania proposed the resumption of diplomatic relations, noting that no peace treaty was necessary. The Greek Foreign Ministry was forthcoming but the Greek Government was not prepared to take the risk of normalising relations, especially at a time when it was under attack by the opposition for its Cyprus policy. Greece replied that the Albanian General Staff should be entrusted to ask for peace but that Greece had not altered its position regarding 'pending territorial issues'.[108] Tirana came back with another proposal for the normalisation of relations, which made 'a direct reference to the territorial integrity of the country' but it was rejected.[109]

Note that until 1955 Greece had been opposed to Albania becoming a member-state of the UN, a heavy blow, especially for such a small country. But apparently the above exchange 'evidently helped Albania to become a UN member in December 1955'.[110] However, the opportunity for the normalisation of relations was lost, for[111]

> in the following years, the Karamanlis government, constantly accused of having been "appointed" by the US in order to "sell out" Cyprus, could not make a radical turn in its Albanian policy, either by withdrawing the claim over Northern Epirus or by normalizing relations with Tirana.

The next year, on May 1956, Hoxha in addressing the 3rd Congress of the Party of Labour (the ruling communist party), stated the following:[112]

> The Albanian people have great sympathy for the heroic Greek people who have fought for their freedom and independence for centuries. Greece was the cradle of civilization. … The Albanian people … are immensely grieved when they see that good neighbourly relations with them are being hindered by the Greek chauvinists who claim that Albania and Greece are allegedly in a state of war… Another hindrance to normal relations between our countries is the claim of the Greek chauvinists to Southern Albania … the borders of Albania are inviolable and will remain so.

Moscow realising that for Athens the top priority was the Cyprus Question (union with Greece) advised Tirana to speak in favour of the Greek position regarding Cyprus. Albania proceeded accordingly with a lengthy article in *Zeri I Popullit* (16 October 1956), the newspaper of the communist party of Albania, in which it supported Cyprus's union with Greece.[113] And a little later the Albanian permanent representative in the UN met his Greek counterpart and expressed Albania's support for the Greek claim to Cyprus, but his interlocutor avoided any mention of resuming diplomatic relations.[114]

In the same year (1956), during the UN General Assembly session, the Greek representative requested via other delegations Albania's support on the Cyprus issue specifying that this could be a step towards the normalisation of relations. Albania agreed to give its support, but when the moment arrived for voting, Shehu, upon instructions from Hoxha, ordered the Albanian representative to be absent from the hall of the General Assembly.[115]

Prior to the February 1957 UN debate on Cyprus, Vassili Kuznetsov, the Soviet Permanent Representative to the UN, told Foreign Minister Averoff that 'the Soviet-Bloc's votes would depend on progress on Greek-Bulgarian and Greek-Albanian relations'.[116] Averoff seemed forthcoming[117] and suggested to Premier Karamanlis that Greece should appear more accommodating towards Albania though not towards Bulgaria, 'but Karamanlis rejected the idea and instructed Averoff to make it clear to Kuznetsov that a favourable Eastern vote on Cyprus would create a favourable atmosphere in Greece's relations with these two countries'.[118]

In 1957, Albania freed the Greek soldiers who had been held in Albania since the days of the Greek Civil War (though not all of them). At the UN, the Albanian delegation this time voted in favour of the resolution supporting the Greek claim to Cyprus and was duly thanked by the head of the Greek delegation.[119]

The year 1958 was to witness the first tangible positive moves by both sides, when Albania accepted Greece's request to clear in common the existing German and Italian mines in the Corfu Channel (for Greece this was necessary for the tourist industry in Corfu).[120] Tirana tried to combine this with the resumption of diplomatic relations as a precondition, but Athens was not forthcoming.[121] In the same year about a thousand Greek citizens (not military) who had for various reasons, either during the Second World War

or during the Greek Civil War, found themselves in Albania were allowed to return to Greece.[122] And throughout 1958 the Soviet Union tried to convince Greece to resume diplomatic relations with Albania but with no result.[123]

The Greek Foreign Ministry and Foreign Minister Averoff favoured the normalisation of relations and were of the view that the claim of Northern Epirus was leading nowhere, and in this they had the agreement of Washington. However, the American officials, 'repeatedly, when asked', told 'Athens that the decision was up to the Greek government'.[124] Averoff was at pains to stress to his Greek colleagues 'that there no longer existed a Greek majority in Northern Epirus, because many Greeks had fled this territory since the Balkan Wars'.[125]

Albania persisted with its attempts to convince Greece to resume diplomatic relations and in the late 1950s Karamanlis and Averoff contemplated normalising relations, and contacts took place in Moscow and in the UN General Assembly between the two permanent representatives.[126] But these attempts run aground as a result of developments on the Cyprus front. Karamanlis and Averoff faced heavy wind due to the accommodation with Turkey that had come about with the 1959 Zurich-London agreements. They were severely – and unjustly – criticised in Parliament and in the press, even though the arrangement was a honourable and balanced settlement in what was in effect, though prematurely, a case of what later came to be known in the literature of ethnic conflict resolution as 'consociational democracy' (along the approach of Arend Lijphart).[127]

Karamanlis in order 'to deflect domestic criticism' and also wanting to embarrass the Leftist party EDA (Greek Democratic Left), which had scored well in the 1958 elections (the Greek Left had been against the Northern Epirus claim since 1945), stated that the Northern Epirus issue remained very much alive in Greek foreign policy.[128] This was reiterated by Averoff, with King Paul saying that the Northern Epirus issue was a problem greater than that of Cyprus. Karamanlis faced by a motion of no confidence by EDA, went as far as to state that the Greeks of Northern Epirus were enslaved. And next year, Karamanlis, in his message to the 12th Pan-Epirotic Congress of North America, spoke favourably of the organisers' contribution to 'the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of Hellenism to martyred Northern Epirus'.[129]

In 1960, the head of the opposition, Georgios Papandreou stated that the Northern Epirus issue existed and was 'a sacred demand', and what happened in the case of Cyprus, namely the abandonment of union with Greece, will not happen with Northern Epirus, whose claim is 'sacred and inalienable'.[130]

A unique incident: Venizelos, Khrushchev, Hoxha and the Soviet-Albanian rift

In 1960 something else occurred, which was unexpected and worth examining at some length. In 1960, Greek-Albanian relations faced a major crisis, when the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev undertook to speak to Hoxha on

the possibility of a greater level of autonomy regarding the Greek minority on matters of education and religion.

Let us see how this came about. In June, the head of the Liberal Party, Sophocles Venizelos, met the Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev in Crimea. Venizelos referred to the unhappy situation of the Greeks living in 'Northern Epirus', but made no reference to the need for territorial changes, but only for 'self-administration', as had been the case in similar situations in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's answer was that such forms of self-administration existed in the Soviet Union and had functioned successfully and that he intended to raise the issue with the Albanian leaders with whom he was to meet at a conference in Bucharest in the same month (June).[131]

Khrushchev having already resumed contact with Yugoslavia 'in the interests of his "peace offensive" in the Balkans', now 'seemed to be cultivating the Greeks'. [132] Albania[133]

> interpreted the gesture as representing implicit Soviet support for Greek territorial claims on southern Albania; since a state of war still existed between Albania and Greece, Albania feared once more for the security of her 460-mile land border with Greece.

The view has been aired that this event, together with the then Soviet-Yugoslavian rapprochement, were among the main reasons for the rupture of Albanians with the Soviet Union and its alliance with China. This has been supported by Greek specialists on Greek-Albanian relations, starting with Basil Kondis,[134] who have taken the cue from William Griffith's study on Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift.[135] The matter calls for further scrutiny.

Hoxha had cultivated relations with China and with Mao Zedong since 1956 when a large delegation of Albanians under him had visited Beijing, the very same year that the long drawn out alienation between Moscow and Beijing was to commence, which ended with a complete Soviet-Chinese rift six years later, in 1960.[136] For both Hoxha and Mao, the triggering event for their disillusionment with the Kremlin had come about due to de-Stalinisation, with the famous 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For both leaders, it was a major shock which they felt undermined the legitimacy of their own Stalinist type regime.[137]

Apparently, the new post-Stalinist Soviet leadership had 'concluded that the economic costs of supporting Albania far outweighed Soviet political and strategic interests in that country' and they 'also disapproved of Hoxha's highly personalized and dictatorial methods of rule'.[138]

For Tirana there was also the Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation that had taken place from 1955 onwards to reckon with, starting with Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade in May 1955. The Albanian leaders 'evidently feeling betrayed by their Soviet colleagues, opposed Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia'.[139] As Elez Biberaj has put it: 'They resented not only the fact that Moscow failed to take into account Albania's vital interests, but did not deem it important even to

consult them' on the matter, while previously Tirana 'had been in the forefront of the Soviet bloc's anti-Yugoslav campaign'.[140] Indeed 'Hoxha perceived the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement not only as a threat to Albania's national security, but, and perhaps more importantly, as a grave threat to his own regime'.[141]

In the most recent study on the Sino-Soviet split by Ylber Marku, based on Albanian and Soviet archives (the Chinese archives are unavailable), the real reasons for the alienation between Albania and the Soviet, were indeed de-Stalinisation and the fear it provoked as well as the fear resulting from the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement.[142] Moreover, China was prepared to aid Albania in its industrialisation goal, which the Soviet Union had refused to do, and to support the Albanians in the threat (real or imagined) emanating from Tito's Yugoslavia.[143] The Albanian leader felt very uneasy about the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for apart from the threat from the 'imperialists', he regarded Tito's Yugoslavia as the main immediate threat to Albania.[144]

This overall assessment, including the economic aspect (that the Soviets wanted Albania to develop only its agricultural sector and not to industrialise) is corroborated by none other than Hoxha in his vivid presentation of the Albanian-Soviet rift in his book playfully titled *'Hrushovian*ët'[145] that is Khrushchev-sophists and in his book *Vepra* (The Work).[146]

In June, in the same month of the Venizelos-Khrushchev meeting, Hoxha had conveyed the following message to Khrushchev (via Andropov), that[147]

> "Albania notes two dangerous tendencies in the Soviet standing: first, underestimation of revisionism [Yugoslavia], second, the tendency to blame the [Albanian] leadership" by insinuating the presence of secrets between the leader and the Politburo members, thus trying to break the unity of the Albanian leadership.
> Clearly a showdown was imminent

As regards the Venizelos-Khrushchev affair and its possible impact, Marku refers to Griffith's opinion. He does not regard it as the main reason for the break in relations, but he sees it as an additional factor which marred relations further, reinforcing Hoxha's view that he could no more rely on Moscow, and he interpreted Khrushchev's 'step as Soviet quasi endorsement of Greek territorial claims towards Albania'.[148] Marku's overall conclusion is that 'Albania's real dissent with Moscow' was 'on issues regarding Albania's national security – possible conflicts with neighbours – and issues regarding the legitimacy of Hoxha's personal rule'.[149]

What is more than certain is that as Hoxha has admitted, he regarded the Soviet support for the Greek request as a device aimed to put pressure on Albania to abandon its alignment with China and remain firmly within the Soviet orbit.[150]

Moreover, according to Miranda Vickers, Hoxha was convinced 'that Khrushchev was out to destroy him'[151] and she makes the following point[152]:

> His apparent paranoia was somewhat justified, since there had been at least three significant postwar threats to Albanian sovereignty. Before

> the break with Stalin, Tito had certainly planned for the incorporation of Albania into Yugoslavia. From 1949 to 1953 the British and Americans had attempted to overthrow Hoxha's regime; and during the period 1960–61 Khrushchev was undoubtedly intending to isolate Hoxha and thereby increase Albania's territorial vulnerability.

Apparently at the time, Khrushchev had tried to carry out a 'palace revolution' in Tirana which had failed.[153]

But let us see what Hoxha has to say regarding Khrushchev and the Venizelos-Khrushchev affair. In his dairy, he notes the following (dated 8 July 1960)[154]:

> I received the Soviet ambassador, Ivanov, who informed me about the talk which Khrushchev had with Sophocles Venizelos. During this talk the latter had proposed to Khrushchev that, in order to improve relations with Albania, the Greek minority of Albania should be given autonomy. Khrushchev had replied to Venizelos, saying among other things that he would transmit his desire and proposal to "the Albanian comrades", because he was going to meet them in Bucharest, etc. I told Ivanov that I oppose the stand which Khrushchev took, that I do not agree at all with the reply that he gave Venizelos, and consider it as a reply not of a friend of Albania, and not at all appropriate for the high post which Khrushchev holds. We resolutely and indignantly reject the proposal of Venizelos. We do not know this Venizelos, I told ambassador Ivanov, but we are well acquainted with his father. In case Moscow does not know him … we can tell them that he put villages and regions of Southern Albania to the torch and killed thousands of Albanians, wanted to burn the town of Gjirokastra as well … and is the one who long ago launched the idea of the autonomy of "Vorio Epirus". We allow no one, not even Khrushchev, to discuss the borders of our country!

The Tirana-Moscow conflict reached its peak at the Moscow Conference of November 1960, attended by 81 communist parties. In his speech, 'Hoxha made it clear that, because of Khrushchev's policies, a break in Albanian-Soviet relations was inevitable. He denounced the Soviet leader for his rapprochement with Yugoslavia, denunciation of Stalin, and intervention in Albania's affairs' and claimed that 'Khrushchev had employed coercive measures against the Albanians'.[155] In the margins of the Moscow Conference there were four meetings of Khrushchev, Hoxha, and Shehu that 'only exacerbated the mutual animosity'.[156] As Paul Lendvai has put it[157]:

> Never before in the history of world communism had a top-ranking Soviet leader been attacked as violently as Khrushchev was by Hoxha. From ideological issues to his policy toward Yugoslavia, from the impermissible subversive activity against the Albanian leadership to

> threats of excluding Albania from the Warsaw Pact and the socialist camp, Hoxha leveled all possible accusations at the Soviet leader. The Albanian indictment culminated in the dramatic story of the summer famine when only fifteen days' supply of wheat was in stock.

In May 1961 a parody trial of the Moscow trained Real Admiral Teme Sejko took place in Tirana, where he and other officers were charged with involvement allegedly organised by Greece, Yugoslavia and the US Sixth Fleet aimed at overthrowing the Albanian regime. Hoxha announced[158]

> the uncovering of a "criminal plot" against the regime carried on by "Yugoslavia and Greece, in collaboration with certain Albanian traitors, who are either in our country or have deserted to Yugoslavia, and in conjunction with the American Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean".

Sejko and three others were found guilty and were shot.[159] Hoxha also referred to 'Tito's traitorous revisionist group… the most aggressive and dangerous detachment of modern international revisionism, and a trained secret service agency of imperialism, chiefly of U.S. imperialism'.[160] According to Griffith 'Much of Hoxha's attack against the Yugoslavs, however, was clearly directed against Moscow'.[161]

On 25 September 1961 Ivanov, the Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, was withdrawn and diplomatic relations were severed on 3 December of the same year amidst mutual recriminations.[162]

At the 22nd Soviet Socialist Party Congress (October 1961), 'Khrushchev denounced Hoxha and called on the Albanian people to overthrow him'.[163] In his concluding speech at the Congress Khrushchev declared[164]:

> We do not recall an instance in which anyone shifted with such dizzying speed from protestations and vows of eternal friendship to unbridled anti-Soviet slander as the Albanians have done. Presumably they expect in this way to lay the groundwork for earning handouts from the imperialists. The imperialists are always willing to pay thirty pieces of silver to those who cause a split in the ranks of the communists. But pieces of silver have never brought anything but dishonor and shame.

In a speech commemorating the 44th anniversary of the October Revolution (7 November 1961), Hoxha responded to the Soviet leader's remarks[165]:

> The Albanian people and their Party will even live on grass if need be, but they will never sell themselves for 30 pieces of silver. They would rather die honorably on their feet than live in shame on their knees.

Other recriminations and accusations were thrown with remarkable abandon. Hoxha, among others, called Khrushchev 'the greatest counter-

revolutionary charlatan and clown the world has ever known', 'a base, unfounded anti-Marxist', 'a plotter and common putschist', 'a real Judas'[166]; and Khrushchev, among others, denounced Hoxha as a 'leftist, nationalist, deviationist'.[167]

Greek-Albanian relations, 1961–1966

Given Albania's quarrel with the Soviet Union, doubts were expressed internationally as to whether the Albanian regime would survive but Athens did not regard this as an opportunity to advance its claim on Northern Epirus.[168] What had made Greece extremely anxious was that Yugoslavia could 'receive a green light from Moscow to topple the Albanian rebel regime and impose its control on the country', which would 'upset the delicate Balkan balance of power'.[169] And in late 1961, 'Averoff told the British and the Americans that it was very important, for Greece, to retain Albania and Yugoslavia as separate political entities'.[170]

This Greek support for Albanian independence apparently brought results, with Albania, in December 1961, releasing 123 Greek soldiers and this was followed by the Greek embassy in Paris approaching the Albanian embassy. According to British officials, the Greeks were out to normalise relations with Tirana, in the hope that a Greek embassy at Tirana 'could give Athens the opportunity to influence events in case trouble ensued'.[171]

The Greek opening led nowhere for two main reasons, with both sides to blame this time round. On the Albanian side, Hoxha's accusation against Khrushchev of being a revisionist and soft with the West did not permit him to 'initiate relations with a NATO member'.[172] On the Greek side, Averoff during a visit to Brussels in the spring of 1962, publicly stated that 'he favoured the resumption of Greek-Albanian relations, which would not entail the abandonment of the Greek claim'.[173]

Albania had developed acute xenophobia, 'the psychology of a besieged fortress'.[174] All 'opponents, real or imaginary, not only its immediate neighbors the "Tito clique and the Greek monarcho-fascists" but also "the U.S. imperialists and the Khrushchevite revisionists have plotted and are plotting against the People's Republic of Albania"'.[175] This 'feeling of permanent external insecurity' was 'reflected in the exhortations to the workers and soldiers' to work harder 'in a revolutionary way with a revolutionary discipline and military rhythm … budding socialism with a pick in one hand, a rifle in the other'.[176]

Reverting to Greek-Albanian relations, in June 1963 talks took place in New York, between the permanent representatives of Greece and Albania at the UN, Ambassadors Dimitri Bitsios and Halim Budo. Budo stressed the need for the normalisation of relations but was categorically opposed to any discussion or mention of 'Northern Epirus', a non-existent issue according to the Albanian Government. The talks led to naught.[177]

Things turned to the worst with the fall of the Karamanlis Government, with Pipinelis as Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister, who had recently

written a book published in the US (in 1963) which advocated the partition of Albania between Greece and Yugoslavia, with Greece receiving Northern Epirus and Yugoslavia the rest.[178] While in office, Pipinelis wanted to promote the Greek claim to Northern Epirus, publicly stating that the international climate favoured it, and going as far as to inquire the British Foreign Office 'whether Britain continued to regard the four-power Council of Foreign Ministers, established in the aftermath of the Second World War, as competent to deal with Northern Epirus'.[179] Needless to say 'London officials were amused by the suggestion'.[180] Fortunately, before things got worse, Pipinelis left office and new elections were proclaimed in the autumn of 1963.

Following elections, in December 1963, Premier Georgios Papandreou stated in Parliament that 'Greece is technically in a state of war with Albania. The Greek people worry regarding the fate of their brethren in Northern Epirus. The Greek Government will attempt, with peaceful means, to guarantee the human rights of our brethren'.[181] However, during Papandreou's Government which lasted until July 1965, the Greek stance was, according to the Albanians, more constructive. Tirana detected fewer references to 'Northern Epirus' or to the 'state of war' by Greek officials. And the opposition party, formerly under Karamanlis, ERE (Greek Radical Union) criticised the Papandreou Government of abandoning the issue, with the latter answering (on 9 October 1964) that it had no intention of restoring diplomatic relations with Albania.[182]

In 1964–1965, the Papandreou Government stated that Greece 'would have to secure some fundamental human rights for the Greeks of Northern Epirus before abandoning the claim over this territory', but in July 1964 Papandreou appeared intransigent. He stated that the issue of Northern Epirus was still pending in the four-power Council of Foreign Ministers of 1946![183]

With the fall of the Papandreou Government, that had been orchestrated by members of his own party, the so-called '*apostates*' (defectors), that had set up a government initially under Stephanopoulos sought to ameliorate relations with Tirana, and considered the state of war between the two states was 'ridiculous'.[184] In March 1966, the Greek and the Albanian Chambers of Commerce signed a commercial agreement, the first ever Greek-Albanian agreement in the post-war era, but it was not implemented for Albania was not prepared to sign the necessary agreement on payments. 'Greek ministers stated that this was the first step towards the restoration of relations, and referred to the possibility of abolishing the state of war', but this was 'resisted by Pipinelis, who kept supporting the claim on Northern Epirus'.[185] The Stephanopoulos Government had a majority of one in Parliament which meant that Pipinelis on his own could bring it down. Thus the effort could not continue.[186]

In 1966, Premier Shehu stated that 'Albania does not accept the claim of Greece that southern Albania, "Northern Epirus", is Greek and this was a matter that was non-negotiable'.[187] He added pointedly that 'not only do we not discuss the question of southern Albania, but we also do not accept

the restoration of diplomatic relations with Greece so long as it disputes the southern borders of the country', adding that Albania 'is prepared to fight with Greece for southern Albania'.[188]

The normalisation of Greek-Albanian relations

In the late 1960s, the US was of the view that the time had come for ameliorating Greek-Albanian relations given the fact that Tirana was no more in the Soviet orbit.[189]

The Greeks were keen to oblige and the irony is that the restoration of diplomatic relation took place with Greece under the Colonels dictatorship, which took over power, with a coup d'état, on 21 April 1967. Within two months of the coup, a meeting was held that included various ministries under the aegis of the Foreign Ministry, in order to restore commercial relations.[190] This was followed by a gradual rapprochement from 1967 until 1971, a Greek initiative reciprocated by Albania, which concluded with the final restoration of normal diplomatic relations.[191]

In October 1969, the UN permanent representatives of Albania and Greece, Budo and Bitsios met and agreed on the development of commercial relations. Following this commercial representatives of the two parties met in Paris (January 1971) to discuss further details and a trade agreement was agreed upon involving 1,500,000 dollars.[192]

The final conclusive talks took place in New York in January 1971 between permanent representatives Sami Baholi and Bitsios. And diplomatic relations were restored on 6 May 1971, being announced simultaneously in Tirana and Athens at 16.00 o'clock, with the due exchange of ambassadors to follow.[193] Hoxha was relieved, as he put it in his dairy: 'Thus, an absurd situation comes to an end. Now the situation will be normalized'.[194]

An interesting side-effect is that given Albania's alignment with China, Greece had to terminate its official relations with Taiwan and to accept the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of the Chinese (the 'one-China' policy), with diplomatic relations established between Greece and China.[195] Interestingly the initial exchanges between the two sides had taken place on Albanian soil in December 1971, between the two Ambassadors in Tirana, Dionysios Karayiannis and Liu Zhenhua, with President Nixon's official visit to Beijing in February 1972 giving impetus to the bilateral negotiations.[196]

This paradoxical development may have been due to the fact that international and Balkan events had led the West to reach out to Albania, and as for the Greek Military Government it was more attuned to the US, on whose aid it rallied for its survival and, moreover, being a dictatorial regime it was less dependent on Greek public opinion and its reaction.[197]

With the fall of the Greek Military Government and the return to democratic rule, Premier Kostantinos Karamanlis stated that publicly Greece desired good relations with Albania and this was also the desire of the Albanian

leaders.[198] However there were several upheavals in Greek-Albanian relations, the main spoilers on the Greek side being the still active Northern Epirus organisations in Greece and North American, which the Greek authorities had difficulty restraining in their clamouring against good relations which they regarded, not unjustifiably, as amounting to a Greek abandonment of the Northern Epirus claim.[199]

On July 1985, Hoxha's book *Two Friendly Peoples* was published, three months after his death, simultaneously in Albanian, Greek and English, which amounted, it seems, to his personal counsel to the Albanian people as regards the present and future of Greek-Albanian relations, namely achieving reconciliation.[200] The book referred to the various vicissitudes of Greek-Albanian relations from 1941 until the end of 1984. But the emphasis was on the friendship between the two peoples which is to their mutual benefit and had deep roots in antiquity, according to Hoxha. He referred with admiration to the ancient Greek civilisation and to various outstanding philosophers and other figures of antiquity, stressing that friendship and cooperation with such a splendid people, the Greeks, with such a rich cultural tradition is worthwhile.[201] He also made sure to refer to the Albanian contribution to the Greek Revolution and independence.

The pro-Greek stance of Albania continued under President Ramiz Alia (1985–1992). This was due, among others, to the fact that following the China-Albania split, Greece was the only contact point of Albania with the rest of world. And Athens and Tirana signed various protocols on cooperation in various fields.[202] In February 1984, Premier Andreas Papandreou, who headed the PASOK (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) Government 'stated publicly that the principle of the inviolability of the European frontiers, stipulated in the Helsinki Final Act, applied also to Albania frontiers', a statement obviously aimed at 'removing the suspicion of any Greek irredentist claims'.[203] In December 1984, the Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias visited Tirana, where scientific-technical and cultural cooperation agreements were signed.[204]

In August 1987, the Greek Government came out with what is known in Greece as 'the unilateral partial lifting of the state of war', promulgated by an act of the ministerial council.[205] The announcement came from Foreign Minister Papoulias who specified that[206]

> The Government pronounces and states that the character of Albania as a hostile state has ceased to exist. The Greek Government is convinced that this statement is the starting point for the settlement of the issues which are still pending between the two countries.

This wording was apparently aimed so as to imply that the state of war has ceased in the past and not then as a result of the statement per se.[207]

There was a shrill outcry on the part of the Right, the nationalists (that in Greece span most parties), the Greek Church, diaspora Greeks in North

America, with the Northern Epirus organisations at the forefront. They all regarded this step as a death knell to the Northern Epirus issue, characterising the act 'a tragedy' and an act 'on the verge of treason'.[208] The opposition leader, Konstantinos Mitsotakis (New Democracy) criticised the decision and stated that his party was not bound by it.[209] But Papandreou though a populist, stood firm, specifying that he had made this realistic move with the good of the Greek minority in mind, and thereafter journalists and personalities of the arts and singers, were encouraged to visit Albania.[210]

Notes

1 Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010, 2nd edition), 485.
2 *Ibid*., 485.
3 Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 138–9.
4 Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 486.
5 Ian Kershaw, *Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940–1941* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 163.
6 *Ibid*., 164.
7 According to Ian Kershaw, Ciano 'stirred Mussolini's easily aroused antagonism towards Greece' with something fed by his minion Jacomoni: 'the story of the treacherous assassination by Greek agents of an Albanian freedom fighter, Daut Hodja', which was presented to the Duce 'as an indication of Greek untrustworthiness'. Hodja was no freedom-fighter, but 'a local bandit and cattle-thief, with a long history of extreme violence and criminality', who had been caught and beheaded by rival Albanians in Albania. See *ibid*., 164.
8 *Ibid*, 174–5.
9 *Ibid*., 167, 175. In 1945 when everything was lost for Nazi Germany, Hitler blamed 'Mussolini's Greek fiasco as the cause of his own subsequent catastrophe' and he mused that had it not been for 'the Italians and their idiotic campaign in Greece', he would have launched Operation Barbarossa 'a few weeks earlier' and this 'had cost him victory in the Soviet Union'. He lamented that apart from the 'catastrophic delay in launching of our attack on Russia', we 'were compelled to expend some of our best divisions there [in the Balkans]'. In *ibid*. 178.
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18 *Ibid*., 22.
19 Ioannis D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945–1967* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 55.
20 *Ibid*., 55.
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66 Dravis, 'Storming Fortress Albania, 430–1; Grose, *Operation Rollback*, 154.
67 Grose, *Operation Rollback*, 155.
68 Dravis, 'Storming Fortress Albania', 428, 430.
69 Bethel, *Betrayed*, 37. A case in point were the so-called 'three musketeers', four (like the original musketeers of Alexandre Dumas), all four Oxbridge young men from influential families, with friends in high office. The musketeers were Julian Amery (the son of cabinet minister Leo Emery, a close friend of Winston Churchill), David Smiley, Neil (Billy) McLean and Allan Hare. See *ibid*., 13–4, 18. According to Nicholas Bethel the 'germ of a plan' was Amery's in an article he published in a London journal, following a visit of his to Greece in the

midst of the Greek Civil War in mid-1948. His article had 'struck a sympathetic chord with British ministers and officials, many of whom thought it was time for Britain and the United States to take some initiative against the Soviet adversary, to hit back at him where he was vulnerable instead of standing idly by and allowing him to swallow country after country'. In *ibid*., 30–1.
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95 Efrosini Koliou, *I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias, 1950–1967* [The Greek Minority in Albania, 1950–1967] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2018), 193–6.
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11 The Greek minority in Albania, 1920–1990

The Greek minority of Albania is directly related to the historical circumstances and the political and social conditions of Albania. Having been present at the beginning of the creation of the Albanian state, the Greek minority has experienced together with the Albanian people all the events that have occurred in Albania since its recognition as an independent state until today. It is this common historical path that determines the reality of the relations of the Greek minority with the Albanian majority with impact on the bilateral relations between Greece and Albania.

The trajectory of the Greek minority in Albania began when the Conference of Ambassadors in London (1913) and with the Protocol of Florence (1913) that defined the line of demarcation between Greece and Albania, leaving within Albania a solid Greek population and within Greece, the Muslim Chams.

On 2 October 1921, Fan Noli, the Albanian representative in the League of Nations signed the document proposed by the British representative in the Council (the main executive organ of the League of Nations) which amounts to the official statement of the Albanian state that it undertakes the obligation to safeguard and respect the rights of minorities in the country, and especially religious freedom, the free use of the minority language and allowing for minority schools.[1]

The legal regime of the minority which involved minority rights was a precondition for Albania's admission to the League of Nations but was also a Greek demand.[2] In view of this Noli did not miss the opportunity to point out to the Council that Albanian minorities resided in neighbouring Greece and Serbia and that similar minority rights should be granted to them as well.[3] The Greek representative Vassilios Dendramis's response to Noli was that he was not authorised to make such a commitment on the part of Greece, adding that the Treaty of Sèvres had not yet been ratified but that once this occurred, the Greek state would respect all the obligations defined in the articles of that treaty involving rights of minorities in Greece.[4] Despite the evasive Greek answer, Fan Noli signed the document, known in Albania as the 'Unilateral Declaration' by which the Albanian government recognised the status of the Greek minority in Albania. The Unilateral Declaration included

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seven articles, on the basis of which Albania assumed the obligation to respect the rights of the Greek minority of Albania and of other minorities.[5]

However, the nature of the obligations undertaken by Albania with the Unilateral Declaration at the state policy level, were a constant point of friction between Greece and Albania at three levels: (a) the territorial dimension of the minority, (b) the numerical size of the minority population and (c) the state of play as regards minority rights.

Territory and numbers

As for the territorial aspect, it is clear that the members of the Greek minority of Albania lived mainly in the south-west of Albania, in the regions of Girokaster, Delvina, Saranda, in some villages located between these regions, as well as in the villages of Himara. But in the three above cities, the minority was never the majority population, contrary to various claims of Greece over the years.[6]

The Albanian state recognised as the territorial extension of the Greek minority only the rural area located between the regions of Girokaster, Delvina and Saranda. That area during the period of the communist regime (1945–1990) became known as 'minority zones' and contained mainly 99 villages. From these zones the villages of Himara, located near Vlora, and any other group that lived outside that area, were excluded and did not benefit from the minority rights, which as a result caused dissatisfaction during the communist era (1945–1990).[7] The reluctance of the Albanian state to recognise a wider minority region has caused friction at the bilateral level between Greece and Albania, which appeared more pronounced in the post-communist period, especially regarding the area of Himara. The denial of minority status in the Himara area also continues to cause tensions between the Albanian state and the local population, the great majority of which defines itself not as Albanian, but as Greek.

The numerical size of the minority population remains a matter of contention between the two countries, with Albania limiting the numbers and Greece claiming exorbitant numbers, especially in the first part of the 1990s. In 1922 the Albanian side, with a letter by the Albanian Foreign Minister to the League of Nations (22 August 1922), claimed that the Greek minority numbered only 16,000 members.

According to the calculation of the Greek Army in 1913, the Greeks in Southern Albania ('Northern Epirus') amounted to some 30,500 in the regions later known in Albania as minority zones, in addition to 3,000 in the villages of Himara. In the League of Nations, on 22 August 1922, the Albanian Foreign Minister claimed that the Greek minority numbered only 16,000 people, that is fewer than the Chams in Greece. The Greek Army in a propaganda pamphlet written in 1919 mentioned 30,000. The League of Nations committee in charge of accurately drawing the frontier between Greece and Albania, calculated that the Greek speakers in the strict sense of the term, that

is the mother tongue spoken at home, amounted to 35,000–40,000. A year later, the British consul in Durres arrived at a smaller number, 25,000–30,000 at the most. In 1928, the official Albanian census of 1923 was made public, which came up with 34,000 in the minority zones and an additional 4,000 in the Himara villages. In 1930 Ambassador Mehdi Frashëri, the Albanian representative in the League of Nations stated that they were only 20,000, with the Greek representative who was present raising no objection. Surprisingly in the very same year, the Albanian census (1930) raised the numbers to 40,846 Greek speakers in Albania. In 1935, Albania stated in the Permanent Court of International Justice that the numbers involved were 37,000.[8]

The 1945 Albanian census came up with 26,535, while the Albanian census of 1960 came out with 37,282 with Greek nationality and 43,097 with Greek as their mother tongue.[9] The April 1989 Albanian census calculated the number at 59,000 (58,758 to be exact),[10] that is only two per cent of the total Albanian population, deciding not to include the Greek speakers of Himara and Arta. The Greek estimates of 1990–1991 were even more inaccurate, though in the opposite direction, claimed that the numbers reached 300,000,[11] or even 450,000, which if accurate would have meant that somehow all the Orthodox Christian Tosks as well as the Vlachs are Greeks![12] The minority for its part corroborated the Greek claims, claiming 400,000–450,000 ethnic Greeks. The more realistic figure for 1990–1991, prior to the exodus of ethnic Greeks and ethnic Albanians to Greece is 100,000–120,000 at the most,[13] with those in the minority zones not more than 61,000.[14] Today in view of the mass emigration of the minority members to Greece their number are closer to 20,000, nearer to what they were originally in the second decade of the twentieth century.[15]

The situation regarding minority rights

On 22 August 1922, the Foreign Minister of Albania sent a letter to the Council of the League of Nations, whereby Albania officially accepted the obligations towards minorities, namely to respect their political, religious and educational rights.[16] This was the aforementioned 'Unilateral Declaration'. From its precise wording it appears that Albania initially did not recognise the minority, as we understand it today, that is, as an ethnic or national minority, but recognised it as an Orthodox Greek-speaking minority, confined to numerically to a mere 16,000 people.[17]

During these 100 years from Albania's confirmation as an independent state in 1921 until today, Albania changed its political system three times, passing from republic to kingdom and from kingdom to communist rule and from communist rule to a period of transition leading to a liberal democracy, though one with several problems. We will address the status and rights of the Greek minority for 1920–1939 and for 1945–1990. The post-communist period is covered in a separate chapter devoted to Greek-Albanian relations in the first part of the 1990s (see Chapter 13).

The period 1920–1939

From the beginning the implementation of the Unilateral Declaration caused friction between Albania and Greece, due to the fact that the Greek state considered that the implementation of minority rights was far from satisfactory. According to the Greek side, the implementation of the Unilateral Declaration was incomplete for only those living in the regions near Girokaster and Saranda were recognised as members of the minority, while four of the seven villages of Himara were not recognised. In addition, Albania drastically reduced the Greeks schools, which during the Ottoman period amounted to as many as 360 and Greece accused Albania for this state of affairs.[18]

Regarding the 360 Greek schools existing during the Ottoman period, the Albanian side pointed out that the issue was resolved following negotiations of Fan Noli with the members of the Council of the League of Nations. In a letter of the Greek Government (dated 17 May 1921) to the Council of the League of Nations, in addition to the request that Albania provides special guarantees for the Greek minority, it was also requested that all the imperial decrees of the Sultan regarding the legal, religious and educational rights of the non-Muslim nationalities of Albania be implemented.[19] Needless to say the far-fetched second Greek request was not taken into account by the Council for the Sultan's rule had ceased to exist since 1912. Obviously, Albania as a sovereign independent state had the right to create a new legal framework for education at the national level. The new legal framework for the education of the Orthodox Greek-speaking minority ended up with only 36 minority schools.[20]

The Greek-Albanian tension increased further in 1923–1925 when Greece began to implement the Treaty of Lausanne which provided for a compulsory exchange of Greek-Turkish populations, in which the Greek state tried to unsuccessfully include the Muslim Albanian Chams (see Chapter 12). On the whole, it is apparent that in the interwar years, Greece had not abandoned its claim to Northern Epirus although it was concealed under interest for the minority.[21]

Albanian Prime Minister Ahmet Zogu directly linked the issue of the status of the Cham Albanian minority in Greece to the status of the Greek minority in Albania and threatened to do the same, to send them all to Greece. Zogu instructed the Albanian ambassadors in Rome, Paris and London (7 November 1923) as follows[22]:

> Please mediate as soon as possible with the governments there to ensure the implementation of the January 20 decision of the Lausanne Conference to exclude the Albanian element from the exchange of Greek-Turkish populations. If this decision is not implemented, then the Albanian government intends to request the exchange of the Greek-speaking element of Albania with the Albanians of Greece.

In general, the fate of the Greek minority followed the ups and down of Greek-Albanian relations during the interwar period, which was also linked with how Greece treated the Chams.[23] The worst moment for the Greek minority came with the adoption of new article in the Albanian Constitution that did not permit the functioning of private schools (the Greek schools were private). In 1933, the Assembly of Albania, under the pretext that the unification of national education was being hindered due to the uncontrolled increase in the number of non-state schools offered by religious communities, private schools and schools in foreign languages, approved the change of Article 206 of the Constitution of Albania, which provided that 'Primary education for all Albanian citizens is compulsory and provided free of charge. Private schools of any category, which have been operating until today, are immediately closed'. About 85 private schools were closed down, including the private schools of the Greek minority, the Serbian minority, the French lyceum of Korca and schools financed by America and some Italian schools.[24] Greece protested vigorously and tried to resolve the matter bilaterally with Albania but with no result. Athens then threatened with the breaking of diplomatic relations and toyed with other forms of retaliation, but at the end chose a more appropriate course, to resort to the League of Nations.[25]

The Council of the League of Nations which initially dealt with the matter decided to send it for an advisory opinion to the Permanent Court of International Justice, which vindicated the Greek minority (6 April 1935) and called for the opening of the schools. Albania complied with the Court's advisory opinion (even though it was not obligatory) and the new law was submitted for approval to the Council of the League of Nations, with the schools functioning again until the start of the Second World War.[26]

The communist phase, 1945–1990

Under Enver Hoxha and his successors during the Cold War, the fate of the Greek minority did not worsen, on the contrary it was slightly better in comparison to the interwar period. Hoxha who was a Tosk from Girokaster and spoke Greek,[27] did not discriminate against the members of the Greek minority per se, set obstacles against them or tried to disperse them, which was surprising in view of the fact that Greek-Albanian relations were much worse than in the interwar years, with the two parties at loggerheads, on either side of the iron curtain (see Chapter 10).[28]

Upon the start of communist rule, Hoxha in a speech (16 April 1945) stated, among others, the following[29]:

> The Greek chauvinists, like dogs barking at the moon, are howling about the tortures which we are allegedly inflicting on the Greek minority in Albania. We are not beasts like them, but are human, we do not kill, massacre or plunder; we do not behave with the minority as the gangs of Zervas and Plastiras do with the population of Çamëria,

> whom they have savagely massacred and murdered. On the contrary, our stand towards the minority is the stand of one of the most advanced peoples of the world, of a people with humane feelings and exemplary justice. The Greek minority in democratic Albania enjoys all rights; it has its own schools, its own teachers, its own press, its own men in the government and in the army.

From his statement it is also clear that Enver Hoxha no longer regarded the minority a 'Greek-speaking Orthodox minority', that is, a linguistic and religious minority as in the Unilateral Declaration of 1921, but defined the minority 'a Greek minority', recognising it as an ethnic or national minority.

The main thrust of Hoxha's policy towards the Greek minority was the following: a strict adherence to the minority zones approach, though they were not officially legally established, with schools teaching Greek but only up to the eighth grade and not beyond that; lack of any clear discrimination against the members of the Greek minority and acceptance of full participation of the members of the Greek minority in the political, social, educational, cultural and economic life of communist Albania. This lack of discrimination led a considerable number of Greeks, especially the university graduates to abandon the minority zones and move to Tirana and other cities. Another interesting consequence was the great rise of mixed marriages, mainly of Greeks with Christian Albanians as well as Vlachs.[30]

Indeed a considerable number of members of the Greek minority acquired higher education and became integrated in Albanian society, finding the doors open to them to become part of the elite and of the higher echelons, be it in the ruling party, the administration, diplomacy, in the universities, in the military as well as in ministerial positions under Hoxha and his successor.[31]

But one would ask how it is possible for a communist dictator such as Enver Hoxha to be so generous towards the Greek minority? The answer does not lie so much in the generosity of Hoxha, but more in the nature of the dictatorship as established by him and his close associates, such as Mehmet Shehu (his right-hand man until he run out of favour and met his death). Hoxha had set up a dictatorship that was not based on ethnic or religious criteria, but on his understanding of communist ideology, thereby creating a totalitarian personal plan of his own, which all Albanian citizens were obliged to accept and live by. There was no national, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender or other discrimination, but everyone was cajoled and brainwashed to think the same way the dictator thought or otherwise face the consequences.

Thus in the political system all citizens had the 'freedom of opinion and expression' regarding their public and personal life, but under one basic proviso: the totality of their expressed thoughts and actions had to be absolutely identified with the ideas and philosophy of Enver Hoxha. Thus it mattered little if his/her mother tongue was Albanian, Greek, Vlach or Slav-Macedonian. At the level of demagoguery, Hoxha recognised the Albanian people as free people and the minority as Greek, but at the level of applied politics he

eliminated individuality regardless of whether one considered himself Albanian or Greek, thus offering a regime of absolute equality without individual freedoms.

In a regime of absolute equality in terms of the lack of individual freedoms that characterised the communist period, Greeks and Albanians suffered to the same extent, but this situation brought more negative results to the Greek minority, especially at the cultural level. This occurred because during the communist period Albania was a hermetically sealed state and the de facto minority lived in the same geographical, economic and political space as the Albanian majority, with the Albanian language of the majority and the Greek language of the minority essentially unequal, regardless of the fact that the communist leadership claimed that the Albanian and Greek languages were in a state of equality. As Professor Panajot Barka (one of the most active members of the Greek minority) rightly observed, 'equality' between the Albanian and Greek languages did not have the same cultural results, because the Albanian language had a clear superiority, with all the relations of the minority with the Albanian state were done in the official Albanian language, be it in the economic and political field or in the field of education.[32]

Greek schools existed in the informal minority zones, namely where the Greek minority lived as the majority, which was the case in the 99 villages of the regions of Girokaster, Delvina and Saranda, but not in the cities of Girokaster and not in the Greek-speaking villages of Himara. In all the other areas were Greek resided, they had no other option than to go to Albanian schools and follow the Albanian educational curriculum.[33]

In the Greek minority schools, the teaching of all the subjects was in Greek. Various well-known Greek poets and other authors were taught, such as the Greek national poets Dionysios Solomos and Kostis Palamas, and newer authors who were leftists, such as Kostas Varnalis and Menelaos Loundemis. Literature as well as other subjects was presented, as one would have expected, from the Marxist viewpoint, including explicit references to the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Older and newer Albanian history was also taught, including the war against fascism and occupation in the first part of the 1940s and reference to the life and deeds of Hoxha. Mathematics, geography and other subjects were taught from Greek translations of the books taught in Albanian schools. Whenever the content seemed to be anti-Greek, it was not against the Greek people and Greece as such, but against right-wing Greece, 'monarch-fascist Greece', a term also used at the time by communists and other leftists in Greece.[34]

In general however, from 1945 until 1990 the Greek minority, did not suffer persecution or hardship qua members of the minority, other than the one suffered by all the other Albanian citizens within the framework of Hoxha's strict version of Stalinist dictatorial communist rule, that is limitations on political rights, religion and so on, as well as severe punishment for any transgressions.[35]

Notes

1 Basil Kondis and Eleftheria Manta, *The Greek Minority in Albania: A Documentary Record* (1921–1993) (Thessaloniki: Institute of Balkan Studies, 1994), 15–6; Eleftheria Manta, *I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Alvania kata ton Mesopolemo* [The Education of the Greek Minority in Albania during the Interwar] (Thessaloniki: IMXA, 2010), 17–9; Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias' [The Greek Minority of Albania] in Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *I elliniki meionotita tis Albanias* [The Greek Minority in Albania] (Athens: Kritiki, 2003), 24–5; Stamatis Georgoulis, 'To kathestos ton ellinikon scholion apo tin idrysi tou alvanikou kratous mehri simera' [The Regime of the Greek Schools from the Foundation of the Albanian State Until Today], in Thanos Veremis, Theodore Couloumbis and Illias Nikolakopoulos (eds), *O ellinismos tis Alvanias* [The Hellenism of Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 190.

2 Georgoulis, 'To kathestos ton ellinikon scholion apo tin idrysi tou alvanikou kratous mehri simera', 189–190; Manta, *I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Alvania kata ton Mesopolemo,* 17–9. On 17 May 1921, Greece in a letter addressed to the Council demanded that Albania should provide special guarantees for the minority. See Kristo Frashëri, *Historia e Çamërisë. Vështrim historik* [History of Chameria: A Historical Vision] (Tirana: UET Press, 2015), 228–9.

3 Manta, *I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Alvania kata ton Mesopolemo,* 22–3.

4 Frashëri, *Historia e Çamërisë*, 235.

5 *Ibid*., 232–4.

6 Marilena Koppa, *Oi meionotites sta meta-kommounistika Valkania* [Minorites in the Post-Communist Balkans] (Athens: Livanis, 1997), 91.

7 Sonila Boci, 'Minoriteti Grek në Shqiperi midis Rezistences Shqiptare dhe asaj greke (1942–1944)' [The Greek Minority in Albania between the Albanian and Greek Resistance (1942–1944)], *Studime Historike*, 3–4 (2008), 133–57; Sonila Boci, 'Marrëdhëniet e Ndërsjellta të Minoritetit Grek me Qeverinë Komuniste Shqiptare (1944–1945)' [The Mutual Relations of the Greek Minority with the Albanian Communist Government (1944–1945)], *Studime Historike,* 3–4 (2009), 83–102; Sonila Boci, 'Politika e Shtetit Komunist Shqiptar ndaj minoriteteve në Shqiperi (1944–1948) [Policy of the Albanian Communist State towards the Minorities of Albania (1944–1948)], *Studime Historike*, 1–2 (2010), 105–29.

8 Lambros Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dinamei Ellines: i mionotita tis Alvanias meta ton Psychro Polemo* [Greeks and Potentially Greeks: The Minority in Albania after the Cold War] (Ioannina: Isnafi, 2020), 43–8.

9 *Ibid*., 48.

10 *Ibid*., 48. Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 176.

11 Miranda Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', Balkan Series, *Defence Academy of the United Kingdom*, 10 (2002), 1.

12 Leonidas Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias apo tin skopia tis istorikis geographias kai dimographias' [The Greek Community of Albania from the Angle of Historical Geography and Demography], in Thanos Veremis, Theodore Couloumbis and Ilias Nikolakopoulos (eds), *O ellinismos tis Alvanias* [The Hellenism of Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 43.

13 *Ibid*., 44; Sofia Vouri and Eleftheria Manta, *Apo ti zoi tis ellikikis meionotitas stin Alvania* [From the Life of the Greek Minority in Albania] (Rethimno: University of Crete, 2007), 41. The number was confirmed by the then Greek Ambassador in Tirana, a close friend of Alexis Heraclides.

14 Lambros Baltsiotis, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias' [The Greek Minority in Albania], in Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias* [The Greek Minority in Albania] (Athens: Kritiki, 2003), 68.
15 Koppa, *Oi meionotites sta meta-kommounistika Valkania*, 91 and footnote 126.
16 Kondis and Manta, *The Greek Minority in Albania*, 34–6.
17 Tsitselikis and Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias', 26–7.
18 Konstantinos Tsitselikis, 'I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Albania' [The Education of the Greek Minority in Albania], in Tsitselikis and Christopoulos (eds), *Elliniki meionotita tis Albanias*, 166; Glevin Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations, the Past, the Present and the Future', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 10:3 (2019), 26.
19 Frashëri, *Historia e Çamërisë*, 228–9.
20 Tsitselikis and Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias', 26.
21 Lambros Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides apo tin eisodo tous sto elliniko kratos mehri tin enarxi tou ellinoitalikou polemou (1913–1940)' [The Muslim Chams from Their Entry into the Greek State Until the Start of the Greek-Italian War (1913–1940)], doctoral dissertation, *Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences* (2009), 100.
22 Kaliopi Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939* (Drejtoria e Përgjithshme e Arkivave) [Evidence on Chameria (General Division of Archives)] (Tirana: Dituria, 1999), 144.
23 Kondis and Manta, *The Greek Minority in Albania*, 17–8.
24 Heliona Mico, 'Vështrim Historiko-Juridik mbi Zhvillimin e të Drejtës së Arsimit në Shtetin Shqiptar (1920–1939)] [An Historical/Legal Overview of the Development of the Right to Education in the Albanian State (1920–1939)], *Studime Hisotirke*, 3–4, Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike Inistitutii Histori (Tirana: Center for Albanian Studies, Institute of History, 2016), 134.
25 Manta, *I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Alvania kata ton Mesopolemo*, 153–74; Basilis Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies: Ellada kai Albania ston 20o aiona* [Delicate Balances: Greece and Albania in the 20th Century] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1994), 155; Kondis and Manta, *The Greek Minority in Albania*, 19–20; Tsitselikis, 'I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Albania', 169.
26 Manta, *I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Alvania kata ton Mesopolemo*, 174–9, 203–65; Kondis, *Evesthites isorropies*, 156–7; B.P. Papadakis, *Histoire diplomatique de la Question Nord-Épirote (1912–1957)* (Athens: Impremèrie J. Alevropoulos, 1958), 137–41; Tsitselikis, 'I ekpedefsi tis ellinikis meionotitas stin Albania', 169–72; Georgoulis, 'To kathestos ton ellinikon scholion apo tin idrysi tou alvanikou kratous mehri simera', 189–97.
27 Gazeta *Panorama*, 8 July 2013 (on line), Interviste me Ish-Zv.kryataren e Kuvendit Popullor gjate viteve te ditatures, Vitori Curri [Interview with Vitori Curri, the Former Vice President of the People's Assembly during the Years of the Dictatorship].
28 Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dynami Ellines*, 35, 37.
29 Enver Hoxha, *Two Friendly Peoples: Excerpts from the Political Diary and Other Documents on Albanian-Greek Relations 1941–1984* (Tirana: Institute of Marxist Leninist Studies at the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania, "8 Nëntori" Publishing House, 1985), 24.
30 Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dynami Ellines*, 41, 74–5.
31 *Ibid*., 51–5; Tsitselikis and Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias', 29–30.
32 Panajot N. Barka, *Letërsia në Minoritetin Etnik Grek në Shqipëri* [Literature on the Greek Ethnic Minority of Albania] (Girokaster: January 2005), 76.

33 Efrosini Koliou, *H elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias, 1950–1967* [The Greek Minority in Albania, 1950–1967] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2018), 97; Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dynami Ellines*, 35–6.
34 Koliou, *H elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias, 1950–1967*, 97; Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dynami Ellines*, 35–6.
35 Tsitselikis and Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias', 29.

12 The Cham issue (1918–early 2020s)

Introduction

The issue of the Muslim Chams of Greek Epirus was and remains one of the major thorns in Greek-Albanian relations from the end of the First World War until today.[1] It boils down to what the Muslim Chams suffered from 1918 concluding with an atrocious ethnic cleansing that took place in 1944–1945, and the repercussion of these events until today in Greek-Albanian relations. It is by far the most delicate and emotional issue between Greece and Albania and it may well be impervious to a mutually satisfactory resolution (see Chapter 15).

The years from 1918 until 1945 can be divided into three phases: (a) 1918–1925, the Chams as victims of the Greek policy against them, the Greek aim being to convince them to leave the country preferably for Turkey, along the compulsory exchange of populations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians agreed at the Lausanne Peace Conference; (b) 1925–1940, Greek measures against the Chams but also two brief benign periods; and (c) 1940–1945, the most dramatic period, in which the role of victim and victimiser switched four times.

The Chams are a sub-group of the Tosks who inhabited the region of today's Greek Epirus at least since the fourteenth century and probably earlier, originally as shepherds, half of which were Islamized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gradually a portion of them became landowners of large estates and the dominant ethnic group in their region of residence, known as Chameria or Chamuria to the Albanians (Çamëria in Albanian). In the interwar period, they inhabited the region of Epirus in three provinces, Paramythia, Margariti and Thyamis that in the 1930s became the prefecture of Thesprotia.[2] The name Chameria probably derives from the ancient Illyrian name for the Tsamis River (Kalamas in Greek).[3]

The Cham problem first arose as a result of the delineation of the border between Greece and Albania at the end of the Balkan Wars, with almost all of the region allotted to Greece, but for some seven Cham villages, centred around the village of Konispol that were given to Albania.[4]

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The exodus of the Chams from their homeland took place in three waves: in the course of the Balkan Wars in 1912–1913; as an outcome of the decision at the Lausanne Peace Conference on compulsory exchange of populations in 1923–1925; and the third and last exodus, where all fled from Greece, was in 1944–1945, as a result of which there are no Muslim Chams in Greece, but for very few most of whom became Christians.[5] As it has been aptly put[6]:

> Two numbers summarize their tragic fate: in 1940, there were close to 25,000 Chams concentrated in the area known as Chamuria in the Epirus region of Greece, just south of the Greek-Albanian border; yet the 1951 Greek census recorded just 127 Albanian-speaking Muslims in the entire country.

As in the case of other similar groups across Europe, 'the story of the Chams, all but forgotten during the Cold War, re-emerged after its end, though distorted by competing nationalist frames'.[7]

The numbers involved

One of the first problems that one encounters when addressing the Cham issue, as in the case of the Greek minority in Albania (see Chapter 11), is trying to establish the precise numbers involved, bearing in mind that the first official census available is the one of 1928, where it is clear that the number presented by the Greek authorities is imprecise and purposefully reduced.[8]

In the first decade of the twentieth century, under Ottoman rule, in the part of Chameria that was to come under Greek rule in the next decade (and later, in 1936, in the new prefecture of Thesprotia) there lived some 30,000 Muslim Chams and a roughly equal number of Orthodox Christian Chams (among whose ancestors were the famous Souliots of the Greek Revolution, see Chapter 3) and there also lived 2,600 Greek-speaking Muslims.[9] The Orthodox Christian Chams assimilated fairly easily into Greek society, having become 'Greeks' although many continue to be bilingual until today.[10]

The Mixed Commission for the Exchange of Populations of the League of Nations which toured Greek Epirus in 1925, estimated the Muslim Chams at about 20,160 inhabitants living in 63 villages and towns. Of these, 2,993 were proclaimed as 'exchangeable' by the 14th Sub-Commission of Epirus, in charge of the population exchange, and left for Turkey.[11]

According to the Greek census of 15 and 16 May 1928, of the 312,634 inhabitants of Epirus, 17,008 were Albanian-speaking Muslims identified as Chams. In fact, this number is deliberately low for two reasons. One is the obvious Greek aim to keep the numbers as reduced as possible, so as to limit heterogeneity, in the name of Greek homogeneity; another is the hesitancy of the Albanian-speaking Muslims to state their mother tongue, for fear of discrimination and other repercussions as not being members of the dominant nationality.[12]

The actual number is certainly well over 19,000, as seen by the internal reports of the local Greek provincial authorities as well as the estimate of the Greek Foreign Ministry in a confidential report. Their number range from 22,000 to 26,000.[13]

According to a study by Fejzi Lepenica, an Albanian political refugee who lived in Ioannina, which appears credible, the Muslim Cham population was 23,000–24,000 and had been as high as 40,000 upon Greek annexation in 1913, but a considerable number sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire and in Egypt due to pressure from the Greek authorities and the indifference of the newly formed Albanian Government.[14] According to the Cham leaders in Greece in a letter to the Greek Prime Minister, they amounted, in 1923, to 40,000.[15] According to Mid'hat Frashëri, the Albanian Ambassador in Athens, in one of his reports to the Albanian Foreign Ministry, the number of Albanians in Greek Chameria as well as in Macedonia (in the prefectures of Kastoria and Florina) were 60,000.[16] In the mid-1930s, according to Xhemal Frashëri, the Albanian consul in Ioannina, the Chams are between 25,000 and 28,000.[17]

In 1936 the Greek authorities estimated the number of Muslim Chams in Thesprotia at 17,311, again a number which is hardly 'in conformity with reality', not least given 'the natural increase in population', which would make upwards of 20,000 far more realistic.[18] The report of the Albanian consulate in Ioannina, which appears more accurate, estimated their numbers at 23,048 in the in the mid-1930s. In the early 1940s, the British estimated the number as amounting to 25,000, thus a more realistic estimate would be 23,000–25,000 in the 1920s that is some 30 percent of the population of Thesprotia.[19]

The period 1920–1939

The Cham issue first appeared in the realm of diplomacy in the context of the compulsory exchange of population decided in the course of the Lausanne Peace Conference (November 1922–July 1923), following the devastating Greek-Turkish War of 1919–1922.

At Lausanne the first agreement to be reached was the 'Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations' adopted on 30 January 1923. It was decided that all the 'Greek Orthodox' (in the religious sense of Eastern Orthodox) and all the 'Muslims' would have to leave from their respective homelands.

This 'unmixing of peoples' as Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary (and coordinator of the Lausanne Conference) had famously put it, was 'thoroughly bad and vicious', but 'necessary' for there was no other option in comparison to the hardships and violence that could ensue if the people in question remained in their original homelands.[20] Rarely 'in history has there been a proposal whose parenthood was so vehemently denied by all the interested parties, even though each side had its own strong reasons for wanting it

to be accepted'.[21] For a fleeting moment, it seemed that the Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians of Cappadocia would be exempted. But Turkey insisted that all should leave, including the Greeks of Istanbul as well as the Patriarchate, for in the years 1919–1922 the Patriarch had called for the incorporation of 'Constantinople' into Greece. Eleftherios Venizelos, who headed the Greek delegation, with the support of Curzon, insisted that the Greeks of Istanbul and the Patriarchate remain in place and later agreed on a quid-pro-quo basis, for the Muslims of Western Thrace to remain, with both minorities enjoying minority rights under the League of Nations minority regime.[22]

The religious criterion for the exchange of population was decided in view of the pre-existing *millet* tradition of the Ottoman Empire. Language would have been more difficult to implement, since the Muslims in Crete (the *Tourkokrites*) and in Macedonia (the *Valaades*) spoke Greek as their mother tongue, while many Greek-Orthodox in Cappadocia and Pontos spoke Turkish as their mother tongue. But the understanding was to apply the religious criterion flexibly in the exchange: no Greek-Orthodox Arabs were deported to Greece, nor were, as we shall see, the majority of Muslim Albanian Chams of Epirus to Turkey.[23]

Greece had hoped to render all the Muslim Chams 'exchangeable', even though Athens was fully aware they were not 'Turks', but Albania with the help of Italy made sure that this was not to occur.[24] On 19 January 1923 in the course of the session of the sub-commission for the exchange of populations at the Lausanne Conference, the Italian delegate Antonio Montagna who chaired the Committee for Minorities, noted that 'the Albanians of Greece' had to be excluded from the exchange (this initiative had taken place upon the encouragement of Mehdi Frashëri, the Albanian delegate who had been sent to Lausanne and became the Albanian representative to the League of Nations).[25] The Greek delegate, Dimitrios Kaklamanos, stated that Greece had no intention of including them in the exchange of populations, adding that they shared the same religion as the Turks, but were not their 'compatriots' ('*si ils sont des coreligionnaires des Turcs, ils n'en sont nullement les compatriots*').[26] The Turkish delegate, Riza Nur Bey agreed. Thus Montagna reassured Mehdi Frashëri that the 'Albanian inhabitants of Turkey and Greece would be excluded "*de droit et de fait*" from the exchange'.[27] Kaklamanos who was the deputy head of the Greek delegation in Lausanne, made similar statements on other occasions, which were even more explicit.[28] And a few months later, Venizelos assured the League of Nations Secretary-General, Eric Drummond, that no such exchange would take place.[29] However, in a meeting between Ambassador Mid'hat Frashëri in January 1924, Venizelos seemed more circumspect, saying that when he had made this assurance he was not aware how 'complex' was this issue.[30]

In any event, the initial Greek position was that the Muslims who proved their Albanian origin could remain in Greece, those settled mostly in Epirus (Chameria), as well in Macedonia and Thessaly.[31]

However, in 1924–1925, the Greek Government switched its position. It came out with the absurd requirement that the Muslim Chams had to prove that they were Albanians with documents showing that they or their parents were born in present-day Albania.[32] The Albanian Government was quick to point out that they were not born in present-day Albania for they were an autochthonous Albanian people having lived in Chameria (now north Greek Epirus) for centuries. The Albanian officials went to great length on this question, demolishing this absurd Greek requirement, at the League of Nations and in the contacts of their ambassadors in Athens (Frashëri), London (Mehmet Konica, the brother of Faik Konitza) and Paris (Zhemal Dino). Both London and Paris assured the Albanians that they would assist them in this regard, though not as to the various measures taken against the Chams, such as expropriations, for this was an internal matter of Greece,[33] with only the League of Nations in the position to intervene regarding expropriations (this was confirmed by Drummond to the Albanian envoy in Geneva).[34]

But Greece persisted, trying everything in its power, a veritable campaign as it turned out, to persuade the Chams to immigrate to Turkey, using even coercive measures.[35] There were also gangs threatening and terrorising the Chams (headed in many instances by what seems to have been Orthodox Chams)[36] to make them abandon Greece, apparently acting with the connivance or the encouragement of the gendarmerie. The Cham leaders and the Albanian Embassy in Athens draw the attention of the central Greek authorities (with the Albanian Embassy sending as many 150 *note verbales* in 1923–1924 to the Greek Foreign Ministry), with the Greek authorities doing nothing and claiming that things were under control.[37] The main reason for this about face that tarnished Greece's image in the League of Nations, was that their presence in Greece by the borderland was seen as threatening military security, for they were seen as 'a foreign body', which in the future was bound to fall prey to 'Albanian propaganda' and moreover their presence also run counter to Greece's attempt at national integration and ethnic hominisation.[38]

Successive Albanian Governments, headed by Noli, Zogu and others were exasperated and did their utmost not to allow this exodus to take place and at the end they succeeded.[39] It was stated to the League of Nations that only language could be the criterion, and their mother tongue was obviously Albanian and as for origin, from Albania. The Albanians were of the view that if the Greeks wanted to rid themselves of the Chams this was a matter that called for Albanian-Greek negotiations and not a matter for Greek-Turkish talks,[40] which could lead to the exchange of populations (Greeks in Albania in exchange for the Chams). Albania (apparently upon an informal suggestion made by a high official of the French Foreign Ministry)[41] formally proposed to Greece an exchange of population between the Greek minority of Albania and the Chams, which though unacceptable to Drummond and to the League of Nations, made Greece apprehensive and it worked as an Albanian strategy.[42]

Given the urgent need for space for the great number of Greeks coming from Asia Minor, the Greek authorities employed a variety of coercive measures of an economic nature, mainly via obligatory expropriations and requisitions, the main aim being to compel them to leave Greece, ostensibly so as to use their large properties for the refugees who had arrived from Asia Minor. Athens hoped to create a current of voluntary Cham emigration to Turkey.[43]

On 15 February 1923, a decree was adopted supposedly aimed at helping the poor farmers, while in fact huge expropriations took place against the immense estates of the rich Chams. The measure was presented to the League of Nations as progressive in character, aimed at social equality and justice, even though the land of the poorer Chams was also expropriated. As for the compensations given they were very limited or non-existent, which was a terrible blow for the poor Muslim Chams, who were not in the position to claim more compensation in the Greek courts. No less than one million square kilometres owned by Chams were expropriated, including a large number of urban properties, houses, mills and so on. A little later 18,000 refugees from Asia Minor arrived and were made to inhabit the lands of those regarded as exchangeable. Athens in contact with Ankara tried to agree for 10,000 Chams to be sent to Turkey, with the Turks agreeing for half the number. At the end, only 2,993 were regarded as 'exchangeable' and left for Turkey.[44]

At this juncture worth mentioning is the far from satisfactory role of the League of Nations, which on the one hand realised that the people involved were Albanians and thus not 'exchangeable', but on the other via its reports sent mixed signals, much to the frustration of the Albanian Government and the Cham leadership.

To begin with, on 14 March 1924, the Mixed Commission (based in Istanbul) for the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations that had been set up by the Council of the League of Nations, decided, correctly of course, that 'Greek subjects who were Moslems and of Albanian origin – and more specifically those residing in Epirus – had to be excluded from the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey'.[45]

The Mixed Commission appointed a three-member 'special delegation' headed by the Swedish diplomat Eric Einar Ekstrand, who's two other members were Hamdi Bey (Turkey) and Petros Metaxas (Greece) to 'collect on the spot' information.[46] The delegation visited Epirus as well as Macedonia and its conclusion, after meeting many people in Epirus and Macedonia, was that the great majority of Moslems who were Greek subjects regarded Turkey as their country of origin and were willing to be included to the exchange of populations and that 95 percent of the population wanted to be exchanged. Obviously the conclusion was erroneous as regards the Albanian speakers, but not the Greek-speaking Muslim Valaades living in Greek Macedonia acquired by Greece in 1913.[47] The Greek authorities claimed that three out of four Chams wanted to be exchanged, while Carl Bratli, the Danish chairman of the Sub-Committee

of the League of Nations dealing with Epirus, after visiting the region (in May 1925) reached the conclusion that some 40–50 per cent wanted to be exchanged.[48]

This erroneous assessment was apparently based on five factors. One was that there was no Albanian participant in the special delegation.[49] Second, the question often put to the Muslim Chams was 'are you Greek or Ottoman' and not 'are you Greek or Albanian' or 'Albanian or Turk', and here the obvious reaction of the Chams, the majority of which were illiterate, was 'Ottoman'.[50] Third, many Chams given the official and unofficial persecution and discrimination and economic malaise that they were suffering under the Greek authorities, wished to be included in the exchange and to get away from their misery.[51] Fourth, a group of muftis (Muslim religious leaders) stated that they were Turks and that the Muslim Chams were the descendants of the original Turkish officials that resided there.[52] Actually, what had happened was that the muftis who were genuine representative of the Chams had been imprisoned so as not to express their views.[53] Fifth, they wanted to leave for Turkey not because they felt that they were Turks or were attracted to Turkey but due to their 'aversion' for Greece (according to Bratli in a letter to the Albanian Foreign Minister).[54] Moreover, some Greek commentators have claimed, though not very convincingly, that given the fact that the majority of Chams, contrary to their affluent leaders, were illiterate, Muslim religious identity may have been more pronounced than being Albanian.[55]

The conclusion of the special delegation was duly criticised as outrageous by Albania to Secretary-General Drummond and by the three great powers, Britain, France and Italy, and the Albanian threat of the expulsion of the Greeks in Albania was also used in this instance.[56] Premier Fan Noli, 'maintained that the Greek authorities were encouraging the "Albanians of Epirus" to consider mass migration by calling them "Greeks of Turkish origin" and convincing them to adopt the second identity in their public pronouncements'.[57] The Albanians succeeded at the end as more and more Chams (especially their leaders in letters and petitions) made clear the obvious, that that they were Albanians and not Turks.[58]

As for the Greek stance towards Albania and towards the Chams, internal developments had a positive result, following a coup d'état that overthrew the Andreas Michalokopoulos Government, bringing General Theodore Pangalos to power. Pangalos who was partly of Albanian (Arvanite and spoke Albanian) origin was 'a declared friend of the Albanians'[59] and one of his primary foreign policy goals was to being about excellent relations with Albania.[60] As put by the then British Minister to Tirana, it was realised that 'Greek interests demand an independent and peaceful Albania, sufficiently stable to obviate undesirable international complications', of which Italy and Yugoslavia 'might avail themselves to the strategic disadvantage of Greece'.[61] According to Pangalos 'for Greece Albania constituted, a natural fortress against any attack emanating from the North'.[62]

Pangalos, whose dictatorial Government lasted for a little over a year (June 1925–August 1926), took a number of pro-Albanian measures, so as to ameliorate Greek-Albanian relations, to the frustration and anger of the Greek Northern Epirus lobby. The Northern Epirus organisations were disbanded, and the Greek Foreign Minister Lukas Kanakaris-Roufos promised Ambassador Mid'hat Frashëri that the issue of the Chams as exchangable would be resolved to the Albanian satisfaction. Soon after Pangalos declared that the Chams would be excluded from the exchange, and the Council of the League of Nations was informed accordingly and its President, the Japanese Ambassador Kikujiro Ishii, announced that the matter had come to a satisfactory ending.[63]

Pangalos went further by agreeing four treaties with Albania, which were favourable to Albania as well as to the Chams, the latter as regards the expropriations and requisitions, which provided for generous compensations even higher than that for the Greeks in analogous circumstances. But if implemented these compensations would have been disastrous to the Greek economy, in view of the fact that they involved one million square kilometres. Thus, predictably the Greek Parliament did not ratify the treaty in question, contrary to Albania which hastened to ratify it. The Pangalos dictatorship was overturned and the democratic government that followed was not forthcoming towards Albania, justifying its stance with the assertion that Albania did not fulfil the undertaking it made to the Pangalos Government regarding the unhindered functioning of the Greek schools in Albania. The end result is that the issue of reparation of the Chams landed property remained in a state of limbo throughout the remaining interwar years, which did little to allay the growing mistrust between Greece and Albania.[64]

In June 1928, the League of Nations turned down an Albanian petition against Greece regarding the expropriations. The rejection on the part of the League of Nations was made on the grounds that it is an internal affair.[65]

From 1926 until 1940 various discriminatory measures were taken by the Greek authorities against the Cham population, in a region which was already strikingly underdeveloped, with almost non-existent roads, very limited hospital care and barely any telephone or telegram facilities, leading the Chams, the poor and the previously rich into a state of absolute poverty and wretchedness.[66]

However, the Chams, with few exceptions chose not to leave their homeland, despite the obvious Greek aim of making their life miserable so as to make them depart. And when Venizelos took over power (1928–1932), the situation changed for a while for the better. Like Pangalos before him he disbanded the Northern Epirus organisations, made sure that the three of the four treaties were ratified by the Greek Parliament and sent Ambassador Leon Melas as minister to Tirana with instructions to strive for friendly inter-state relations. Venizelos also seemed poised to improve the situation of the Chams economically and socially, in a spirit of justice. Konstantinos

Stylianopoulos, an official who enjoyed the confidence of Venizelos, was sent to Epirus to access the situation, as well as a high-ranking official from the Ministry of Agriculture, with both coming up with extensive reports about how to alleviate the injustices to the Chams and measures that would improve their standard of living. Various forms of reparation were envisaged, such as direct return of expropriated urban properties, the grating of bonds or direct payment of reimbursement and several Chams took advantage of these unexpected measures. However little came out of these efforts which may have led to the integration of the Chams into Greek society.[67]

As a result of their predicament, a number of Chams during the late 1920s and 1930s emigrated initially to Turkey and later mostly to Albania, where they created a kind of Cham quasi lobby.[68] The situation remained unchanged following the fall of the Venizelos Government and deteriorated markedly with the arrival of the Metaxas dictatorship in August 1936. Metaxas was harsh and cruel not only towards the Chams (but also towards the Slav Macedonians), who were faced as real or potential 'internal enemies'; there were fines, arrests, imprisonments, internal exiles (mainly displacements to faraway Greek islands), beatings, torture, etc.[69]

The most fateful blow was a 1937 law by the Metaxas regime, by which there was an obligatory expropriation of all the Chams lands that had until then had somehow avoided it, with the compensations meagre, arriving belatedly or simply non-existent.[70] The use of the Albanian language was forbidden not only in public but also in private, Albanian books and periodicals were no longer tolerated and under the pretext of searching for arms, the police broke into Cham homes beating the inhabitants and making arbitrary arrests.[71] This was to prove the last straw that clearly showed to the Chams that they were 'a foreign', an 'unwanted' and 'hostile body', which could never be integrated with the Greeks, and the Greek state could legitimately make them suffer so as to make them all leave the country.[72] Indeed, it seems that on the eve of the Second World War the majority of Chams in Greece had concluded that their only hope for change to the better could come from Albania perhaps with the support of Italy.[73]

The suffering of the Chams in Epirus, with the Greek authorities clearly to blame, was the ideal ground for the intrusion of Albanian and Italian influence, 'propaganda' as the Greeks tended to call it. The aim was to cultivate and enhance the sense of Albanian ethnic and national identity. The Albanian press was at the forefront, propagating the dream of a Greater Albania that was to include Chameria and Kosovo. In this, Italy was also involved, with financial help and even arms. This was a pet project of Mussolini and Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, his son-in-law,[74] though of course their real agenda was different, to dominate the whole region. In Albania, the main protagonists of these efforts were Chams who had left Epirus and had studied in Albanian schools, in professional or military schools (with scholarships of the government), with many of them serving in the Albanian Army, and the elite among them serving in the Albanian Foreign Ministry.[75]

In Epirus, the main figures involved were Cham Albanian irredentist nationalists who associated themselves with Fascist Italy (they set up the Albanian Fascist Party of Thesprotia) and secondarily Nazi Germany. They included mostly formerly rich Chams, in particular the Dino family, comprising of three brothers, Mazar, Nuri and Rexhep Dino, as well as Jasin Sadiq, Abdulah Kasim, Adem and Zumo Muho, Refi and Abdullah Pronjo and others.[76]

The tragic years 1940–1945

The most dramatic phase of the Greek-Cham encounter in Epirus took place during the Second World War, from the Italian attack against Greece to the German departure in late 1944 and its aftermath in 1945. During this period, there were no less than four alterations in the roles of victim and victimiser.

Prior to the Italian attack and as Greek-Italian relations worsened by the day, with an increasing number of Italian troops stationed ominously in the border with Greece from Italian-occupied Albania, the Greek authorities took a number of measures against leading Chams, such as the sending of hundreds of them into internal exile, with dozens of the elderly among them dying due to harsh conditions. This proved a blunder for those persecuted happened to be among the moderate senior leaders and it rendered Italian propaganda against Greece more convincing.[77] As a result, according to a Greek Foreign Ministry report, some 150 Chams left for Albania where they joined the Italian Army, which they hoped would 'liberate' Chameria.[78]

When the Italian Army invaded Greece on 28 October 1940, the Muslim Chams hailed the Italians as liberators. Some 9,000 Albanians who had been recruited by Jacomoni in occupied Albania fought with the Italians (see beginning of Chapter 10). In these 18 days before the impressive Greek counterattack that drove the Italians out of Epirus, Cham bands pillaged and burnt Greek houses and stores. And even murders were recorded, apparently as a revenge for land disputes of the previous decades, with some Italian soldiers participating in the general anarchy that prevailed in Thesprotia.[79]

From the Greek counterattack that started on 14 November 1940 until the April 1941 German invasion, the role of victim-victimisers was reversed, with the Greek authorities and individuals Greeks, especially those that found their houses sacked and burned, the victimisers. As many as 1650 Chams, aged 18–70 years old were arrested and banished to Corinth, the Greek islands of the eastern Aegean and faraway Crete. A small number for which proof was found about violent acts against Greeks were tried and shot and there were also some isolated murders of Chams as acts of retaliation by Greeks who has suffered in these two weeks of Italian occupation, with the Greek authorities turning a blind eye.[80]

When Greece, following the German attack surrendered on 23 April 1941, the Italians returned to the region. Jacomoni appointed the former Albanian Ambassador Xhemil Dino (of the Dino family), as 'High

Commissioner of Thesprotia' (he had served as Foreign Minister under King Jog as well as in the puppet Albanian Government of Sefqet Verlaqi, installed by the Italians). However, Xhemil Dino, who was known in Greece for his irredentist views regarding Epirus, never assumed his duties, due to protests by the Greek Government of occupation under General Georgios Tsolakoglou toward the German Occupation authorities. In view of this, the duties of commissioners were undertaken de facto by his two brothers, Mazar and Nuri Dino.[81]

The Albanians through the Italians, attempted but were unable to extract Thesprotia from Epirus and annex it to Albania. It remained together with the rest of Epirus in occupied Greece for the Germans were against any such change, apparently given the fact that the great majority in Thesprotia happened to be Greeks.[82]

Muslim Chams, though not the majority of Chams, participated in the security forces and military operations with the Italians, many with Italian uniforms (with a band in their arms as 'Cham') until 1943, and after the departure of the Italians, in 1943–1944, they participated with the Germans, though not with German uniforms. In these years, there were many acts of destruction, assaults, murders, arson and so on by the Muslim Chams against the Greek inhabitants.[83] And the irredentist propaganda was intensified under the Dino family, Jasin Sadiq, Abdulah Kasim, Adem and Zumo Muho, Refi and Abdullah Pronjo and others most of them fascists. In July 1942, Mazar and Nuri Dino set up the 'National Albanian Council' (Këshilli Nacional Shqipëtar), known as 'Xilia' in Greek (from Këshilli) which was a mechanism of local self-government and local committees in the cities and villages that 'essentially replaced the Greek administration and ultimately seized judicial, administrative and police authority'.[84]

Following the formation of the Council, the terrorist acts against the Greek inhabitants intensified, the ultimate aim being the irredentist goal of annexing Chameria (Thesprotia) to Albania. Worth mentioning when Thesprotia was under Italian rule is an episode in the village of Spatharati of Margariti in December 1942, which included torture and murder of the village elders, and the burning of Eleftherochori in March 1943. Nuri Dino and his nephew Rexhep Dino, who was in charge of the youth organisations of the Council, also headed the *Balli Kombëtar Çam* (Cam National Front).[85]

The *Balli Kombëtar Çam* was part of the wider *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front) based in Albania which had been founded in November 1942 by Mid'hat Frashëri. The *Balli Kombëtar* in Albania proper whose aim was the unification of all the Albanian-inhabited regions, was initially anti-fascist and against the occupying Italian forces and attempts were made, especially by the British 'to get the Balli Kombëtar and the communists to work together in the fight against the occupiers, but they soon became bitter rivals', with Albania descending into civil war.[86] With the victory of the communists in the autumn of 1944, *Balli Kombëtar* was accused of having collaborated with the Germans and its leaders fled abroad and some were killed.[87]

In the summer of 1943, when the German replaced the Italians in Epirus, two appalling acts occurred, which were to be a point of reference and an alibi for what was to happen later with the Greeks as victimisers.[88] One was the destruction in July–August 1943 of the Fanari region in the course of 20 days, with Mazar Dino, Nuri Dino, Kasim Sadik and other Chams involved. The destruction was complete, with all the animals and belongings transported to the German storehouses or Cham houses, with Fanari unrecognisable given the destructions, and there were killings of dozens of Greek inhabitants and rapes of women. In Paramythia, in September 1943, 60 Greek notables were arrested (as a German reprisal for six German military killed by the Greek guerillas), 49 of which were executed. Cham connivance is attested by the fact that Nuri Dino was present (together with 150 Chams) and had been consulted by the Germans as to who were to be arrested and executed, and apparently Chams participated in the firing squads.[89]

The last act of the dramatic five years period was played out in 1944–1945, with yet another, the fourth, reversal of the role of victim-victimiser. As the German forces were about to leave but had not yet departed, EDES (*Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Syndesmos*: National Republican Greek League) under its leader, the retired colonel Napoleon Zervas (a former pro-Venizelos officer)[90] became active in Epirus and particularly in Thesprotia, with dire consequences for the Muslim Chams. Apparently, the British command, keen to secure the Ionian littoral so as to ensure maritime supply routes, encouraged Zervas to take over the region.[91]

EDES was a small right-wing outfit contrary to the majority of the Greek resistance at the time under ELAS (*Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos*: Greek Popular Liberation Army) and its military wing EAM (*Ethnico Apeleftherotiko Metopo*: National Liberation Front). The brigades of EDES, whose majority were Greeks from the region (hence their 'passion for revenge'),[92] attacked the Chams with great savagery, killing even those that surrendered and murdered unarmed people, including women, elderly, children and even infants. The most appalling episodes were in Karvounari, Parga (where 52 Chams were murdered), Filiates (where 157 were murdered) and in Paramythia were 400–600 Chams of all ages were murdered in 'an orgy of violence'.[93] The total number of those killed all over Thesprotia by EDES guerillas was upwards of 1200, with Albanian source claiming 2,000–2,771 killed.[94] However, there were several instances where the Greek inhabitants sheltered and saved Chams, and this had also been the case previously by Chams saving Greeks when the Chams were on the attack.[95]

In view of the EDES attacks against them, some 22,000–25,000 Chams,[96] 'virtually the entire Cham population, defenceless and petrified, took to the hills and fled for their lives to Albania'.[97] But it is clear that EAM headed by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which dominated the resistance movement was decidedly against the acts of EDES, was supportive of the Chams and for affording them extended minority rights, and a number of Chams had joined ELAS, forming a battalion of some 250 Chams.[98]

As for the British and US officers in the region, they turned a blind eye to what the EDES forces were doing, perhaps even encouraging them. The well-known philhellene, Chris Woodhouse, head of the British Military Mission in Greece reported as follows to his superiors in London[99]:

> Encouraged by the Allied Mission I headed, Zervas drove the Chams out of their homes in 1944. The majority fled to find shelter in Albania. Their eviction from Greece was carried out with large-scale bloodshed. Zervas's work was followed in March 1945 with a large scale massacre of the Filiates Chams that cannot be excused. The result was the eviction of the undesirable Albanian population from their land.

He later confessed 'that the Allied Mission under his own orders had decreed in favour of evacuating all Albanians from Epirus in order to facilitate operations against the Germans', though he admitted that 'the actual implementation was bloody',[100] but that 'the Chams deserved what they got but Zervas' methods were pretty bad'.[101]

Joseph Jacobs, Head of the US Mission in Albania (1945–1946) wrote[102]:

> In March 1945 units of Zervas's dissolved forces carried out a massacre of Chams in the Filiates area, and practically cleared the district of the Albanian minority. According to all the information I have been able to gather on the Cham issue, in the fall of 1944 and during the first months of 1945, the authorities in north-western Greece perpetrated savage brutality by evicting some 25,000 Chams – residents of Chameria – from their homes. They were chased across the border after having been robbed of their land and property. Hundreds of male Chams from the ages of 15 to 70 were interned on the islands of the Aegean Sea. In total 102 mosques were burnt down.

Zervas who was an avid supporter of the Northern Epirus issue and collaborated with MAVI (*Metopo gia tin apeleftherosi tis Voreiou Epiru*: Northern Epirus Liberation Front), sought the approval of the Allied authorities to enter Albanian, the obvious aim being to control the area and smooth Greece's future claim to Northern Epirus. Enver Hoxha upon taking wind of it (and probably feeling confident due to his cooperation with ELAS) informed the Allies that should Zervas venture into southern Albania, he would chase him if need be even in Greek territory. The General Headquarters Middle East of the Allies told Zervas not 'to cross over even one inch' for 'he would be held responsible for whatever ensues'.[103]

In 1945, some 3,000–5,000 Chams dared return to their homes in Epirus, following assurances by ELAS, which had reached an agreement with the Albanian communists. But when the Chams arrived, ELAS was no more in control of Epirus and the region came again under EDES. In the beginning of March 1945, the EDES guerillas attacked the unarmed Chams, killing

70–100 of them and the rest sought refuge once again in Albania.[104] In the 1951 Greek census only 127 'Albanian-speaking Muslims' were recorded in Epirus and 487 in the whole of Greece.[105]

It is clear that what took place amounts, by today's standards to a clear case of 'ethnic cleansing' and a very brutal one at that.[106] However, until today it is not clear whether this occurred as 'the result of a top-down decision to bring the "Cham problem" to an end or if it reflected only decisions by local commanders bent on the extraction of revenge'.[107]

However, four things are certain: (1) when the first massacres occurred (those of 1944) there was no Greek Government in charge, other than the exile Government which appears not to have given any such orders; (2) the main partisan force EAM-ELAS had nothing to do with, on the contrary they supported the Chams and would have targeted only the minority of fascists; (3) EDEK's agenda was precisely ethnic cleansing and it was proud of its 'patriotic achievement'; and (4) even though the Greek Government was not responsible for the first main massacre, it was in place in the massacres of March 1945 and from then on kept a complete silence on the matter, at the same time bestowing honours to Zervas. Premier Georgios Papandreou made him honourary Major General and in 1947 and again in 1950 he served as cabinet minister, under the Maximos and Sophocles Venizelos Governments. As Lambros Baltsiostis has put it, the official Greek state, with EDES having become a part of it, with its stance seemed to 'sanction' the removal of the Chams.[108]

Worth mentioning is also the following. As pointed out by Eleftheria Manta: 'the vast majority of the Albanian population did not participate in these arbitrary acts' against the Greek inhabitants.[109] And she adds[110]:

> the effective criminal activities … were assumed by the [Cham] military groups recruited by the Italians and the Germans … It is also certain that amongst the Albanian Chams there were also moderate elements who did not agree with these tactics. They opposed violent actions and arbitrary high-handedness, and did not harbor a "smoldering hatred" for their Greek compatriots. Indeed, on the contrary, there is much information on cooperation with the Greek inhabitants for the protection of their villages from the criminal elements or for the granting of asylum to persecuted Christians.

An assessment

On the part of Albania and Albanian authors, there is a predictable tendency to downgrade the criminal acts perpetrated by the Muslim Chams and that whatever was committed, however regrettable, was solely the act of a small fascist clique under the Dino family and other former landowners who collaborated with the occupying forces.[111] This hardly makes all the Chams guilty, but only a small minority and one can hardly speak in terms

of collective guilt there is also reference to the Chams who had fought with ELAS, known to the Greeks as the 'Turkish-Albanian brigades'.[112] And the atrocities and crimes of EDES are presented, with the numbers augmented, as a clear case of ethnic cleansing due to the fact that they were Muslims and Albanians, hence 'unwanted', while the Greek 'collaborators' with the Italian and German occupying forces were left unmolested.[113]

The Greek reaction until today is that they were all – or most of them – collaborators with the occupiers and a great number of them committed abhorrent acts, and in general there is collectively responsible, as is the case of the Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovakia, and consequently they cannot return or be eligible for compensation. The official report of the Greek National Bureau of War Crimes refers to 1,065 ethnic Greeks having been killed, the burning of six churches and a great number of arsons and pillaging.[114]

The obvious case for comparison is the one of the Sudeten Germans who were made to leave Czechoslovakia. The Czech President Edvard Beneš made sure to get the approval of the Allies (at the Potsdam Conference, 17 July–2 August 1945) for this ejection and the 'booting out' that took place was complete. Beneš was able to convince the Allies of the collective guilt of the Sudeten Germans with the invading German forces (though initially those that had demonstrably not collaborated were to be allowed to remain in the country).[115] In the Zervas case, the approval was not official but he did have a green light however dim, from Woodhouse and others, and the ejection was equally complete. But here the comparisons end.

The numbers involved in the Sudeten case are huge, but prior to their evacuation that had not been atrocities against them, so as to drive them out, but for the early unruly 'wild phase' as it came to be known, where as many as 700 were killed in the process of evacuating 700,000–800,000 Sudeten Germans. Following the Potsdam decision, the remaining 2,500,000 were driven out with almost no casualty.[116]

Thus the obvious dissimilarities between the two cases, are the following: (a) no previous atrocities by those ejecting them (the Czechoslovak authorities); (b) those ejected had in considerable numbers collaborated with the invaders who were their ethnic kin and many of the Sudeten Germans had participating in the SS forces and Gestapo; (c) in their majority and given the previous election results, they had voted 90 per cent for the Nazi Sudeten Party of Konrad Henlein, whose aim was autonomy as a stepping stone for union with 'motherland' Nazi Germany[117]; (d) Germany had taken over Czechoslovakia, while in the case of Albania, and contrary to the Greek claims, Albania had not invaded Greece together with Italy or Germany. One could also make the following point, however gruesome it may be: out of some 3,200,000 Germans, 700 met their death while evacuating the country with the Czechs responsible for it, which amounts to the death of 0.00022 per cent, while in the EDES and Cham case, out of some 20,000 Chams, at least 1,500 met their death, that is 0.75; and moreover the Chams that met

their death were 500 more than the Greeks killed, with the Chams directly or partly responsible (1,065 according to the official Greek report of the Greek War Crimes Bureau).

With the end of the Cold War, the Sudeten issue was discussed, especially in 2002, in view of the Czech Republic's quest for EU membership, but nothing came out of it. Eminent European legal experts as well as the European Court of Human Rights on a related matter were in agreement that questions prior to 1950 are not to be included in any claims.[118]

To conclude, as regards the Greek and Albanian stance on this question, the reality is probably somewhere in the middle, between the Greek and Albanian narrative, and most importantly the majority of the Chams were not to blame for what happened in 1941–1944.

The aftermath (1945–1990)

Surprisingly the expulsion of the Chams did not lead to any form of retaliation on the part of Albania against the Greek minority, even though there was some pressure on the new communist Albanian Government to do so as a form of revenge.[119] And Enver Hoxha did not do what is considered by and large natural in such circumstances, to have the refugees inhabit the regions of the Greek minority so as to delude their numbers in southern Albania. Apparently, there was only one exception in Saranda and in very few villages.[120] Why one wonders this apparent generosity on the Albanian side?

The following factors may have been responsible for this posture: that the majority of Greeks in Albania had sided and fought with the Albanian communists against the occupying forces; and that contrary to them, the Chams had done the very opposite, siding with the occupying forces, indeed with the very Fascists and Nazis that the Albanian communist partisans were fighting against, which hardly ingratiated them to the new Albanian communist leaders.[121]

In this regard worth mentioning is the following statement by Hoxha to a Conference of the Albanian Anti-Fascist Youth (16 April 1945)[122]:

> Here amongst you are representatives of EPON (The All-Greece Youth Union Organization), the representatives of the heroic anti-fascist youth of the valiant Hellenic people from whom the chauvinists of Athens want to divide us … The Greek minority has won these undeniable rights at the cost of bloodshed, fighting shoulder to shoulder with its Albanian brothers against the common enemy – fascism and its lackeys.

A little later in the Paris Peace Conference, in which Hoxha castigated the Greeks for their 'Northern Epirus claim', he referred favourably to the Greek minority and then denounced what the Greeks had done to the Chams, though without going into details, contrary to what one would have expected. His stated on 21 August 1946 at the Conference[123]:

> In June 1944 and March 1945, the armed bands of the quisling general, Napoleon Zervas, set their villages on fire, plundered their property, and killed thousands of men and women, old people and children. More than 20,000 people of Çamëria who managed to escape, fled to Albania where, although they are assisted by the Albanian government and people, they live in great poverty.

At the Paris Peace Conference Albania demanded the following: (a) the repatriation of the Chams back to their homelands in Epirus; (b) return of their properties and compensation; and (c) security and guarantees as regards their individual, cultural and political rights. Nothing came of this.[124]

In 1945–1947, a Cham organisation, the Anti-Fascist Committee of Cham Immigrants Cham National Committee campaigned for the return of the Chams to their homeland and tried to internationalise the issue at the UN and elsewhere, and the Hoxha regime seemed to approve of this initiatives at least initially. But the efforts to internationalise the Cham issue 'fell, for the most part, on deaf ears'.[125] The only tangible outcome was that the UN allotted 26 million dollars of goods for the Chams through UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), distributing tents, foodstuffs and medicine to the camps with the Cham refugees.[126]

With the end of the Greek Civil War, Hoxha 'put a lid on the Cham issue in 1953',[127] but made sure to render all the Chams Albanian citizens and dissolved the Cham Committee.[128] The Greek authorities in 1953 and 1954 passed laws declaring all Cham property abandoned and thus duly confiscated. And even today elderly Chams wishing to see the land of their birth, even on a short visit, are turned back at the border by Greek customs officials.[129]

From 1950 until the end of the Cold War, no allusion was made by Albania to the Cham issue, despite the bad bilateral relations that lasted until the late 1960s, which were marred, as we have seen, by the 'state of war' and especially by the persistence of the Northern Epirus issue on the part of Greece (see Chapter 10).

1991–today

From 1991 onwards, the Muslim Cham issue resurfaced[130] on the part of Albanian Government at times with a vengeance. In most of the official Greek-Albanian meetings at high level be it in Tirana, Athens or elsewhere, it has been raised by the Albanian side as a case of ethnic cleansing worth addressing and reference is also made to the need for compensation. The standard Greek reaction is that the matter is 'non-existent', as for the Chams they were guilty of treason and had committed heinous acts against the Greek population in collusion with the occupying forces. At times, a Greek high official (President or Prime Minister) has threatened to depart from a meeting held in Albania and did so in at least one occasion by a Greek President. Only once,

momentarily did Greece under Premier Konstantinos Mitsotakis, in December 1992, hint at the possibility of compensation for those that had demonstrably not colluded with the occupying forces.[131] And on other instances, the Greek minority was brought to the fore (namely that its rights were not adhered to) and in one or two instances the bogey of Northern Epirus as a counter-balance. In the last years (2020–2023), under the Kyriakos Mitsotakis Government, which harbours a large chunk of diehard nationalists, a barely disguised threat has been made, that on the day of reckoning when the times come for Albanian accession to the European Union Greek will veto Albania's accession (ergo blackmail on the part of Greece as Bulgaria had done towards North Macedonia). But the more moderate Greek approach is that as regards property the Albanians of Cham origin who are Albanian citizens can resort to the Greek courts or even to international courts.[132]

In Albania, an Albanian Cham organisation has been set up in May 1991, named Çamëria Shoqeria Politike Atdhetare (CSPA*:* Chameria National Political Association), today known as CPA (Çamëria Politike Atdhetare), which acts as a lobby for the Cham cause, organising events propagating what the Chams had suffered in Epirus, and the CPA has a newspaper *Camëria – Vatra Amtare* (Chameria – the Motherland).[133]

At the political level it is the Democratic Party of Sali Berisha that is traditionally the champion of the Chams while the Socialist Party has been more guarded, rarely raising the issue with Greece or doing so in a more subtle manner.[134] At times the Albanian Government especially under Berisha, as well as the Albanian Academy of Sciences, have alluded to Albanians living in northern Greece 'who do not dare to declare that they are Albanians'.[135]

In 1994, the Cham issue was at its peak, with two characteristic instances during Berisha's Presidency. One was the history text-book 'History of the Albanian people' for schools which under a chapter titled 'Chamëria', referred to 'Greek massacres', torture and other heinous acts, stating that this was a case of 'genocide' and that 'the brutal genocide of the Albanian minority' was 'monstrous', it was 'one of the most abominable brutalities ever known by the history of mankind'.[136] The book in question was later withdrawn but in Albanian schoolbooks, there remain several negative references as regards Greece.[137]

In 1994, 30 nationalist Albanian deputies requested the recognition of 27 June, the anniversary of the Paramythia massacres by EDEK, as a day of mourning for the 'genocide of the Chams' by the Greeks. The proposal was adopted by the Albanian Parliament and henceforth the 27 June is devoted to the memories of victims of what is called 'The Day of the Greek Chauvinistic Genocide against the Albanians in Chamëria'.[138]

The CPA and other smaller Cham organisations continue with their activity of propagating the Cham case not only in Albania but also in Europe and in the US. Their main demands are to be able to return to their native land, recover their properties, compensation and the recognition of 'the genocide of the Chams'. They claim that the Chams in Albania amount today to some

300,000 but they are probably much less. However, they wield greater power than their numbers or percentage in the Albanian population, for many of them are rich and successful businessmen with influence on politicians and on the mass media.[139]

In the last two decades, the demands of the Cham lobby have found expression initially in two parties, which later merged. One was the Party for Justice and Integration (*Partia për Drejtësi dhe Integrim*, or PDI) set up in 2005; and the other the Party for Justice and Unity (*Partia për Drejtësi dhe Unitet*, or PDU) established in 2009. The two Cham parties merged in 2011 as the Party for Justice, Integration and Unity (*Partia Drejtësi, Integrim dhe Unitet*, known from its acronym PDIU). As was the case with the previous parties, PDIU is nationalist and right-wing. PDIU's present President is Shpëtim Idrizi and its founder Tahir Muhedini is honorary president. PDIU apart for catering for the Cham issue, which is its primary concern, is at the forefront of other Albanian 'national issues', such as Kosovo and its international recognition, the Albanians in North Macedonia (mainly in Tetovo), Serbia (mainly in Preševo) and Montenegro.[140] PDIU has not been very successful in Albanian elections and has experienced a downward trend: earning in the 2013 elections, 44,957 (that was its peak) with 2.61 per cent and four deputies (out of 140 member Albanian Parliament), three deputies in the 2017 elections and only two in the 2021 elections.[141]

However, PDIU joined the ruling coalition Government of Rama, a move that angered Greece and made the Greek minority party, the Unity for Human Rights Party (PBDJN) which participating until then in the coalition to abandon it. And Rama supported the Cham issue in his first Government which lasted until 2017. But in Rama's second Government PDIU was not included, thereby allowing Rama to deal with the issue in ways less irritating to Athens.[142]

A long time has passed since the tragic years 1940–1945, with Greek-Albanian relations today better than ever before. Yet 'there is still a lingering sense of injustice and victimization among the Chams'.[143] And the very least 'they seek is an acknowledgement of the injustice done to them', but many also 'want a return of their property or compensation for their losses, and many of them seek the right to go back and live in their native Chameria' and 'a restoration of their Greek citizenship'.[144] However, in general from 1990 until today, the relations between Albania and Greece have not been determined by the Cham nor has it been, despite the standard Albanian stance that the matter exists and the standard Greece reaction that it does not exist.

Notes

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2 Leonidas Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias apo tin skopia tis istorikis geographias kai dimographias' [The Greek Community of Albania from the Angle of Historical Geography and Demography], in Thanos Veremis, Theodore Couloumbis and Ilias Nikolakopoulos (eds), *O ellinismos tis Alvanias* [The Hellenism of Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 36; Georgia Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands. Cham Muslim Albanians: Perspectives on a Conflict over Historical Accountability and Current Rights', *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 6 (2002), 173.
3 Miranda Vickers, 'The Cham Issue: Albanian National & Property Claims in Greece', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, G109 (April 2002), 3.
4 *Ibid*., 2.
5 *Ibid*., 2–3.
6 Stathis N. Kalyvas, 'Forward to the English Edition', in Eleftheria K. Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece: The Chams of Epirus (1923–2000)* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2008), 9.
7 *Ibid*., 9.
8 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 17–8.
9 Konstantinos Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece: From Historical Minorities to Immigrant Newcomers* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2012), 303.
10 I thank the Greek Albanian specialist Leonidas Empirikos for this valuable piece of information.
11 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 17.
12 *Ibid*., 18–9.
13 Lambros Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides apo tin eisodo tous sto elliniko kratos mehri tin enarxi tou ellinoitalikou polemou (1913–1940)' [The Muslim Chams from Their Entry into the Greek State Until the Start of the Greek-Italian War (1913–1940)], doctoral dissertation, *Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences* (2009), 115–7, 121.
14 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 19–20.
15 Letter of Ali Dino (a Former Member of the Greek Parliament) to the Greek Premier (dated 16 October 1923), in Kaliopi Naska (ed.), *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939* (Drejtoria e Përgjithshme e Arkivave) [Evidence on Chameria (General Division of Archives)] (Tirana: Dituria, 1999), 127.
16 *Ibid*., 245–6.
17 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 121.
18 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 20.
19 *Ibid*., 20–1; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 37; Lambros Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece: The Grounds for the Expulsion of a "Non-existent" Minority Community', *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 12 (2011), 2.
20 Quoted in Michael Barutciski, 'Lausanne Revisited: Population Exchanges in International Law and Politics', in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2003), 25.
21 Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: How Mass Expulsion Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (London: Granta Books, 2006), 42.
22 *Ibid*., 87–107; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 67–82.
23 Renée Hirschon, "'Unmixing Peoples" in the Aegean Region', in Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean*, 8; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 67–80.
24 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 76–7; Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 26.
25 Dimitris Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria and the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey', *Balkan Studies*, 27:2 (1986), 303; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 25.

26 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 303; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 74; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 24.
27 In Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 25.
28 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 228–9.
29 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 303; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 24–5; Lena Divani, *Ellada kai mionotites: to systima diethnous prostasias tis Koinonias ton Ethnon* [Greece and Minorities: The System of International Protection of the League of Nations] (Athens: Nefeli, 1995), 223.
30 Midhat Frashëri to the Albanian Foreign Minister, in Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 225.
31 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 75.
32 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 26, 29.
33 See Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 226–7, 246, 251, 254.
34 *Ibid*., 256.
35 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 76–77; Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 8; Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 289–90.
36 This is our own tentative assessment judged by their names, which were Qiamo Harrilaos, Nikola Kiamo, Cile Mastora and Theodor Camatos. See for them, Albanian Embassy in Athens to Albanian Foreign Minister, in Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 241, 289–90.
37 *Ibid*., 238, 241, 252, 254, 262, 289–90.
38 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 33; Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 174; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 305; Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 264–5.
39 Glevin Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations, the Past, the Present and the Future', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 10:3 (2019), 26.
40 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 228–9.
41 Ambassador Xhemal Dino to Foreign Minister Iljaz Vrioni, report dated 1 January 1924, in Naska, (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 254.
42 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 306–8; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 30–1, 37–8.
43 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 33.
44 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 76–7, 305–6; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 37–8; Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 174; Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 7–8; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 37, 41; Dimitris Michalopoulos, *Scheseis Elladas kai Alvanias, 1923–1928* [Relations between Greece and Albania, 1923–1928] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1987), 35, 38–9; Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 38–9; Yiorgos Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes: stoixeia gia tin katastrofi ton mionotiton stin Ellada. Evraioi, Tsamides* [Undesirable Compatriots: Data on the Destruction of the Minorities in Greece. Jews, Chams] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2005), 140–2; Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 122; Divani, *Ellada kai mionotites*, 225–6.
45 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 247; Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 305.
46 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 305.
47 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 288, 295–7; Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 306; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 29.
48 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 229, 248.
49 Robert Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', in Robert Elsie, *Keeping an Eye on the Albanians: Selected Writings in Albanian Studies* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2015) (Kindle Edition), location 2810.

50 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 258.
51 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2810; Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 228, 232–5.
52 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 288.
53 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 234.
54 *Ibid*., 235–6.
55 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 31.
56 *Ibid*., 29–31.
57 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 306.
58 Naska (ed.) *Dokumente për Çamërinë, 1912–1939*, 238, 288–9.
59 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 38; Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 155.
60 Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 309.
61 William Seeds to Sir Austen Chamberlain, Annual Report, 1926 (Confidential, 13187, 21 March 1927). We thank theatre director Corinna Seeds (the granddaughter of Ambassador Sir William Seeds and cousin of Heraclides) for handing us two annual reports of the then British minister in Tirana.
62 Quoted in Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 309.
63 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 38–9; Michalopoulos, 'The Moslems of Chamuria', 309–10; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 155–6.
64 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 39, 41–2; Divani, *Ellada kai mionotites*, 235–38.
65 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 61–2; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 157.
66 Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 9–12.
67 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 62–71, 73; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 304, 308; Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 311–20.
68 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 361–5.
69 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 77–9;
70 Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 145; Yiannis Ktistakis, 'Periousies Tsamidon kai Alvanon stin Ellada' [Properties of Chams and Albanians in Greece], *Dike International*, 37:2 (2006), 174, 178; Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 27.
71 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', locations 2815–20.
72 *Ibid*., location 2820; Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 1, 7–8; Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 133–71.
73 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 406.
74 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 106–111.
75 *Ibid*., 50–8, 97–118; Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 12; Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 146; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 38.
76 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 121, 124–5, 128, 132–3.
77 Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 407–8.
78 *Ibid*., 408.
79 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 120–1.
80 *Ibid*., 121–2; Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 147–50; Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 310–11; Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 12; Divani, *Ellada kai mionotites*, 257; Baltsiotis, 'Oi mousoulmanoi Tsamides ', 410.
81 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 125; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 38.

82 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 125, 127.
83 Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 159–60; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 130–1; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 39.
84 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 132.
85 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 311; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 130–3; Divani, *Ellada kai mionotites*, 258. Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 38; Lambros Baltsiotis, response paper in 'Historical Dialogue on Cham Issues', Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University (2013–2014), 2–4; Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 178.
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87 Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 30.
88 Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 163.
89 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 147, 149; Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 178; Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 163–5.
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91 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', locations 2838–40.
92 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 161.
93 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', locations 2838–50. See also Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 27 footnote 17.
94 Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 165–6. Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 182–4. Vickers, 'The Cham Issue', 6; Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', locations 2848–50.
95 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 138.
96 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 311.
97 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2850.
98 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 136–7, 140–1.
99 Quoted in Vickers, 'The Cham Issue', 6.
100 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 176–7.
101 Quoted in Baltsiotis, response paper in 'Historical Dialogue on Cham Issues', 4–5, footnote 20. See also for similar statements Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 183–4.
102 Quoted in Vickers, 'The Cham Issue', 7.
103 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 175–6.
104 Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 184.
105 Baltsiotis, 'The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece', 13; Kalyvas, 'Forward to the English Edition', 9; Kallivretakis, 'I elliniki koinotita tis Alvanias ', 39.
106 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2839.
107 Kalyvas, 'Forward to the English Edition', 10.
108 Lambros Baltsiotis, 'Oi Arvanites' [The Arvanites], in Despina I. Papadimitriou and Serafim I. Seferiades (eds), *Atheates opseis is istorias: kimena afieromena ston Yiani Yianoulopoulo* [Unseen Aspects of History: Texts Dedicated to Yianis Yianoulopoulos] (Athens: Ekdoseis Asini, 2012), 367.
109 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 130.
110 *Ibid*., 138.
111 Kretsi, 'The "Secret" Past of the Greek-Albanian Borderlands', 179–80.
112 James Pettifer, 'The Heroic Image in Albanian Historiography', www.professorjamespettifer.com. Visit 1.2.2021.

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116 *Ibid*., 17–20.
117 *Ibid*., 13–6.
118 *Ibid*., 11.
119 Margaritis, *Anepithimitoi sympatriotes*, 171.
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125 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2863.
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127 Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 29.
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129 Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2870.
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131 *Ibid*., 209–11, 213–5; Stavros Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou: Albania kai Ellada sti meta-Hoxha epohi* [In the Constellation of Nationalism: Albania and Greece in the Post-Hoxha Epoch] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2010), 236–7.
132 Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 31–2; Menelaos Dalianis, *To megalo anigma: chroniko ton ellino-albanikon scheseon sto deftero imisi tou 20ou aiona* [The Great Opening: A Chronicle of Greek-Albanian Relations in the Second Part of the 20th Century] (Athens: Polytipo, 2008), 68, 88–90, 97; Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 236–7, 286–7, 291; Vickers, 'The Cham Issue', 9.
133 Vickers, 'The Cham Issue', 8–9; Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 31; Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 222; Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', location 2883.
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135 Manta, *Muslim Albanians in Greece*, 218, 220. The Albanian Academy of Sciences mentioned some 30,000 in Chameria, Kastoria and Florina. In *ibid*., 218.
136 In *ibid*., 212.
137 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 238–9.
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140 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Party_for_Justice,_Integration_and_Unity
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142 Bledar Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication: A Tool for Stronger Albanian-Greek Relations', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 79.
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144 *Ibid*., location 2891.

13 Early post-Cold War
The turbulent first part of the 1990s

With the end of the Cold War and Albania in transition to democratic rule and market economy, there were hopes that Greek-Albanian relations would further ameliorate to the benefit of both countries. There was for a while a positive climate, first under Albanian President Ramiz Alia and initially under President Sali Berisha and Greek Premier Konstantinos Mitsotakis respectively. And from 1991 until April 1993, there was strictly speaking no major crisis in Greek-Albanian relations, with the various problems and misunderstandings that arose on several occasions kept within reasonable bounds.

However, there was a snag. In the post-communist conditions in Albania which in the early 1990s was desperately trying to enter the path of democratisation and free market, the Greek minority could become politically more powerful and could assert its rights more effectively. It could now call for the extension of its rights not only by addressing the Albanian state but also by involving the European institutions and in this it had the wholehearted support of Greece, the richest and only state in the Balkans that was a member of the European Union.

The years 1991–1992 witnessed 'an unprecedented exodus of Albanians to Greece' (as well as Italy), with almost a million Albanian immigrants in Greece and Italy, most of them in Greece.[1] The legal Albanian immigrants alone were estimated in the 1990s at 400,000–450,000 according to the Greek authorities (to be exact 433,249 in the 2001 Greek census).[2] Thus the total number was at least 700,000 at its peak, roughly one-sixth of the people of Albania.[3] It was in 2008 due to Greece's major economic problem, in which many Albanians lost their jobs, that 180,000 of them (18–22 per cent of the immigrants in Greece) returned home which caused a sharp cut in remittances, but there was a slight recovery from 2016 onwards to 616 million euros (though less than the peak reached in 2007 which was 952 million euros).[4]

Greece's original concern with the advent of the post-Cold War was the well-being of the Greek minority and initially its stance seemed genuine and not concealing other agendas, such as meddling in Albania's internal affairs or raising again the Northern Epirus issue. Mitsotakis paid the first ever visit of a Greek Prime Minister to Albania on 13 January 1991. In Albania, he

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referred to the rights of the Greek minority (stressing to members of the minority which he met that they should remain in place in Albania and not emigrate to Greece) to be reassured by President Alia and other Albanian officials that he need not worry, and Mitsotakis on his part promised extended Greek investments in Albania and enhanced economic cooperation.[5]

On March 1992, in the second parliamentary elections of Albania, held on March 1992, the Democratic Party of Albania won by 57 per cent. As a result, the leader of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha became President. There followed under Berisha, a number of positive steps towards Greece, such as the following: pursuant to a Greek request, accepting a Greek Archbishop for Albania, Anastasios (a major concession on the part of Tirana, for more befitting would have been to select instead an Orthodox Christian Albanian)[6]; accepting the opening of a Greek consulate general in Girokaster, without requesting reciprocity (which is common in such cases); the opening of a department on Greek literature at the University of Girokaster that, among others, could prepare teachers who could teach in the schools of the minority; and allowing the flying of Greek flags in the minority regions during Greek anniversaries. However, it is doubtful whether these moves were appreciated in Greece or were merely seen as a sign of Albanian weakness.

In early 1993, relations seemed by and large cordial. The two sides were contemplating reaching an agreement on the continental shelf (in April 1993), further enhancing economic cooperation, adopting various agreements on practical issues (many of them dealing humanly with the immigrants) and were prepared to negotiate and adopt a far-reaching friendship and cooperation agreement. But then in May 1993 things suddenly turned sour, which unfortunately coincided with the visit of the first post-communist Albanian Prime Minister Aleksander Meksi (a distinguished historian of architecture and former academic). When Meksi arrived in Athens for his official visit, the first ever visit by an Albanian Premier to Greece, the overall Greek-Albanian agreement, which would have been historical, was ditched by Mitsotakis. Ostensibly the damage was done due to disagreements as to the legal status of the immigrants, the non-extension of the minority zones in Albania, the issue of Cham properties and disagreement regarding Kosovo.[7]

But the disagreement and lack of mutual confidence run deeper fuelling mutual suspicion and mistrust. Let us see why.

The expectations for a rapprochement were not fulfilled for a number of reasons, in particular due to the following: (a) the resurfacing of the Northern Epirus issue as well as the Cham issue, though with an obvious difference for the Greeks were present in Albania while the Chams were not present in Greece, hence with Greece in the position to put pressure more effectively and more alarmingly; (b) the issue of confiscated Cham property and the agitation of the Cham organisations in Albania; (c) the role played in Greece by the Northern Epirus organisations now headed by the ultra-nationalist Metropolitan Sevastianos (see below); (d) the extension of minority education beyond the so-called minority zones sought by Greece, demanding schools

even in regions were the Greeks where in a small minority; (e) the issue of the Albanian immigrants in Greece who were in a state of legal limbo (including the immigrants who were members of the Greek minority) and were often ill-treated and harassed; (f) the Kosovo crisis and its repercussions in Albanian-Greek relations (with Greece strongly opposed to Kosovo's secession from Serbia, for fear that any change of state boundaries would be calamitous, leading to a domino effect in the Balkans); and (g) the Greek-Macedonian clash and its repercussions in Greek-Albanian relations (most of all Greece's anger at Albania's recognition of Macedonia with its constitutional name).

There were also other issues that simmered, such as Tirana's complaints that Athens was using the issue of immigrants, whose annual remittances of more than 200 million dollars were critical to Albania's economic recovery (in 1995 the remittances from Albanian immigrants in Greece amounted to 25% of/Albania's GNP)[8] as 'a bargaining chip to extract concessions from Albania on domestic and foreign policy issues'; and a strong current of opinion in Greece throughout the 1990s that criminality in Greece had risen due to the Albanian element (which was hardly the case as proven by relevant studies in Greece); Greeks fears regarding the deepening of Albanian political and military relations with Turkey, Greece's arch-rival in the region; and Albanian fears of the Athens-Belgrade axis (with Serbia's Milosevic).[9]

Thus after the initial improvement of Greek-Albanian relations from 1991 until early 1993, relations plummeted, amidst mutual recriminations. Greece charged Albania of violating the human and minority rights of the Greek minority and that it was pursuing a systematic and harsh policy aimed at forcing ethnic Greeks to leave the country, yet there is no clear evidence that the Albanian Government 'systematically repressed the Greek minority'.[10] It is a fact that many ethnic Greek left Albania for Greece in 1992–1993, but this was done mainly for economic reasons,[11] as had been the case with the ethnic Albanians that had gone to Greece (or Italy) in search of jobs and a better life. Berisha for his part had taken some minor symbolic measures against members of the Greek minority (such as unfavourable transfers of civil servants or officers who were ethnic Greeks and some discrimination for jobs in the public sector), probably aimed at drawing their attention to the need to remain loyal Albanian citizens.[12]

Thus the main legitimate grievance of the minority was the non-acceptance of extending Greek-language education (and not its limitation) to more regions, notably in Himara, as reported by Max van der Stoel, the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, following three visits to Albania in 1993 and 1994.[13] The High Commissioner was impressed by the 'considerable number of mixed marriages'. He reported that members of the minority have told him that they felt 'a sort of psychological pressure', but his mission 'had not received concrete evidence'.[14] This was also the overall assessment of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights that the main problem for the Greek minority in Albania was the issue of education in the Greek language, as well as some discrimination for jobs in the public sector.[15]

By and large, the Socialist Party of Albania was more relaxed and friendly towards Greece than the Democratic Party of Albania and charged Berisha's administration of having 'damaged ties with Greece'.[16] The Socialist Party denounced the Albanian Government for wrong priorities and amateurish management that can lead Albania to isolation.[17]

In any event, President Berisha gradually came to be weary of the possible intentions of the more powerful Greece: that it might undermine one way or another Albanian national sovereignty by taking a grip on the weak Albanian economy and otherwise meddle in Albanian internal affairs, by using the Greek minority or taking advantage of the presence of Archbishop Anastasios.[18] And there was also the worst cost scenario that Greece might, with the Greek minority as pretext, rekindle the forgotten Northern Epirus issue, going as far as to threaten Albania's territorial integrity.[19]

Greece with its vivid interest for the well-being of the Greek minority, when in fact the minority was not persecuted, and its desire that its members should not leave Albanian territory, gave the impression to Albania, that it had territorial claims.[20]

On the whole, the overall Greek perception was that the Albanian state was innately mistrustful of Greece, that it had not completely broken with the policies and mentalities of its communist past, was bent on getting rid of the Greek minority and it had an irredentist agenda, 'Greater Albania' as regards Kosovo, Tetovo and even towards Greece were though there were no Albanians there, the latter based on so-called 'historical rights', and that Berisha in particular was toying with the Greater Albania idea and was resolutely anti-Greek.[21]

It was not known to the Albanians, but from early 1992 onwards the Greek Government was contemplating two different courses of action: keeping to the original correct stance of limiting its demands to the Albanian adherence to the human and minority rights of the Greek minority; or using this otherwise legitimate concern as a facade for a far more assertive and hostile stance towards Albania, by resurrecting the Northern Epirus issue and all that it entails.[22]

It is well established that under Mitsotakis and with his approval, which was enthusiastically accepted by Foreign Minister Andonis Samaras, the second option was adopted which was bound to play havoc with Greek-Albanian relations by 1993 with repercussions in the next years. Apparently, the strategy adopted contemplated two stages: first to call for an autonomous Northern Epirus and when autonomy was achieved to press for secession and annexation to Greece, provided the regional circumstances were favourable. In fact, Mitsotakis and his close associates had come to believe that Albania was on the verge of disintegration (a case of highly implausible wishful thinking held at the time also as regards the Republic of Macedonia).[23]

This stance on the part of Mitsotakis, hardly known as a hawk in foreign policy, was unexpected and came as a surprise even to seasoned Greek diplomats in charge of Balkan affairs.[24] The main explanations for this *contre*

nature posture of the Greek Premier are two. One is that given his moderate stance on other international issues of concern to Greece, by comparison to the nationalists in the ruling party, notably as regards relations with Turkey, the Cyprus problem and towards Macedonia, he wanted to appear more 'patriotic' and assertive with the Albanians, and thus avoid criticism in his party and from the wider 'patriotic lobby' which spans most Greek parties. But more convincing is another reason. The Kosovo crisis nearby, which had brought to the fore the possibility of altering Balkan frontiers had whetted the appetite of the Greek nationalists and from Mitsotakis's more realistic perspective it was perhaps an opportunity not to be missed as regards the Greco-Albanian frontier.

This Greek misperception regarding the change of boundaries had been mainly the doing of one of Mitsotakis's closest advisers and confidants at the time, Nicos Gatzoyiannis. He was a Greek American citizen of Greek Epirote origin, known in the US as Nicholas Gates (author of a 1983 novel titled *Eleni*, based on the true story of the killing of his mother Eleni by the Greek communists in the 1940s). Gatzoyiannis had served as president of the Pan-Epirotic Federation of North America and was known (or so he presented himself) as having close ties with top decision-makers in the US, in particular with members of the security community, such as for instance George Tenet (another American of Greek Epirote origin) who was to become CIA Director from 1996 until 2004. It seems that Mitsotakis had fallen under the spell of Gatzoyiannis.[25]

But let us trace the deterioration of relations that became clear as day from mid-1993 onwards. Four episodes are characteristic and worth mentioning. One was the activity of a Greek cleric, Archimandrite Chrysostomos (Dimitrios Maidonis), who on his own and without the approval of the Orthodox Archbishop of Albania, the astute Anastasios (but probably in collusion with Sevastianos), was fomenting trouble in southern Albania among the most extremist Greeks, by distributing various maps where the south of the country was depicted as being part of Greece, none other than 'Northern Epirus'.[26]

As a result, in June 1993 Berisha chose to harden his stance against the expansionist policy (Northern Epirus),[27] and he commenced with the arrest and expulsion of the extremist priest (actually in the presence of the Archbishop and the Greek consul).[28] The Socialist Party was opposed to the actions of the extremist Greek priest, but it disagreed with how the matter was handled. It pointed out that chauvinist circles should not be dealt with hastily but in a way that does not strain bilateral relations and that 'Instead of effectively neutralizing the prejudices and policies of certain chauvinistic circles, in many cases our foreign policy contributes to raising the walls of hostility and anti-Albanism around us'.[29]

This action which led to a demonstration on the part of the minority and tough measure by the Albanian police, resulted in the first wave of minority members leaving for Greece.[30] As soon as it became known that the Albanians had expelled the Greek priest, the Greek Minister of Public Order

(25 June 1993) ordered the arrest of a considerable number of Albanian immigrants. In the next couple of days, until the morning of 27 June, the Greek Police arrested some 4,600 Albanian immigrants throughout Greece, deporting them to the Greek-Albanian border, while by July 1, it arrested and deported an additional 18,000.[31]

On 27 June 1993, the Albanian Government stated that the expulsion of the Greek cleric was not directed against Greece but was an act against a specific person who was a representative of the most extreme anti-Albanian circles. The announcement emphasised that the Albanian Government remained firmly in favour of its friendship with Greece.[32] But on the next day (28 June) President Berisha sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, alleging, among other things, that the deported Albanian immigrants had been ill-treated and beaten by the Greek security officials.[33] Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Virginia Tsouderou, denied the Albanian accusations, claiming that there was no evidence of mistreatment of the deported Albanian immigrants.[34]

It was obvious that Greek-Albanian relations had entered a critical phase at a rapid pace and it was also clear that the deportation of 20,000–30,000 Albanian within five days was done by the Greek side in revenge for the expulsion of the Greek cleric. No doubt the Mitsotakis Government was aware that it is the sovereign prerogative of the Greek state to regulate the presence of foreigners in the country (even including mass deportations however inhumane they may be), but apparently it was not equally aware that the Albanian side has the very same right as a sovereign state, in the Albanian case expelling only one individual (taking also into account that he did not have diplomatic immunity).

Then came a second episode of a totally different order and far more serious. Mitsotakis came out with a statement of six demands on 14 July 1993 presented as prerequisites for the amelioration of Greek-Albanian relations, which apparently had been drafted mainly by Gatzoyiannis. It included allowing the return of Chrysostomos to Albania, the opening of minority schools at all levels wherever there were Greeks in Albania, equal opportunities for the participation of ethnic Greeks in all public services, a return of Church property confiscated by the Hoxha regime and no barrier to be placed on the return of ethnic Greek Albanians from Greece to Albania. But more crucial was the last (sixth) demand prerequisite: Mitsotakis drew a parallel between the ethnic Greeks in Albania and the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, to the effect that whatever was demanded by Tirana regarding the former would be afforded to the Greeks in southern Albania that is autonomy. And there followed more deportations of Albanian migrants from Greece.[35]

Albania, as one would have expected, was taken aback by the Mitsotakis statement. How could such a parallel be drawn between the almost two million suffering Kosovar Albanians and the small and non-suffering Greek community in Albania? Berisha for his part made sure to state in no uncertain terms that the six demands were totally unacceptable.[36]

In fact it is little known that Mitsotakis soon realised his mistake with the statement and told his people in Ioannina as well as the members of *Omonoia* (Concord), the ethnic Greek organisation and party in Albania, to 'forget the six points', but the damage was done.[37] For instance, Sotiris Kiriazatis, one of the leading hard-liners of *Omonoia*, at a meeting of the Pan-Epirotic Federation of North America, held in Preveza (in Epirus) in August 1993, stated that autonomy remained the steadfast aim of the 'Northern Epirotes', adding that 'we want nothing more or less than what the Kosovar Albanians demand', to be warmly applauded by the audience.[38]

Omonoia had been a political party set up in Albania by ethnic Greeks two years before on 11 January 1991. Its first President Andreas Zorbalas was a moderate, and the party's aim was to safeguard the cultural identity of the minority and the development of good relations between the minority and the Albanian authorities and friendly Greek-Albanian relations.[39] In the 1991 Albanian elections *Omonoia* it was able to secure five representatives in the Albanian Parliament, three from Saranda and two from Girokaster.[40] When in June 1991 Albania did not permit ethnic parties to run in the elections, *Omonoia* transformed itself into an ostensibly non-ethnic party named Union for Human Rights.[41] Soon however *Omonoia*, which was the overall organisation, in its first congress (held on 10 February 1992) was taken over by the extremist nationalists headed by Sotiris Kiriazatis, Thodoris Bezianis and Kostas Kyriakou (apparently the latter two were the real leaders of the extremist faction).[42] This was done upon the initiative of the Mitsotakis Government, with the strong support of Sevastianos, Metropolitan of Konitsa, a fiery cleric who styled himself as 'Exarch of Northern Epirus', who had on several occasions until his death in December 1994, called for the annexation of Northern Epirus.[43]

Relations with Albania figured repeatedly in the 1993 Greek election campaign, with Mitsotakis but also Andreas Papandreou criticising Berisha. But following PASOK's victory, Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias visited Tirana and spoke of a new chapter opening in Greek-Albanian relations. And a mixed commission was set up to deal with contentious issue, but progress was not very quick, and a little later, in April 1994, relations reached another very low point, the worst in decades.[44]

This was a result of a third episode, which was again of a totally different order. It was a terrorist act, an attack by a group of eight armed men of an outfit named Front for the Liberation of Northern Epirus (MAVI), a forgotten miniscule terrorist group of the early 1940s which had now resurfaced. On the night of 10 April 1994, the terrorists crossed the Greek-Albanian border and attacked a military post near the Greek-Albanian frontier, near the village of Peshkëpia (Episkopi in Greek), killing an Albanian officer and a soldier, and wounding three soldiers.[45] They shouted 'this will happen to you for Northern Epirus'. MAVI immediately took responsibility for the action in writing, claiming that it had imprisoned for a while 130 soldiers and upon leaving took Kalashnikov automatic rifles and ammunition, specifying

that the 'attack' of the 'eight commandos' was 'a military action' justified by 'injustice' and the 'terrorizing of the Greeks of Northern Epirus by the Albanian Government'.[46]

Clearly, the new PASOK Government of Andreas Papandreou had nothing to do with this act and made sure to condemn it forthright. However, Berisha reacted strongly (10 April), raising the issue in the UN Security Council[47] and accusing Greece of 'state terrorism' and of 'full responsibility' for the attack, and of harbouring expansionist goals, going as far as to suggest that Greece and Serbia were coordinating activities aimed at destabilising the region.[48] The Greek Consul General of Girokaster was expelled (14 April), however a few days later Berisha stated that it may be that the Greek Government was not responsible for the episode.[49]

The Albanian authorities arrested a considerable number of citizens and searched houses belonging to members of the minority (this was to lead to a second wave of minority members leaving for Greece) and ended up by arresting, on 18 April 1994, five ethnic Greeks, leading members of *Omonoia*, including Bezianis and Kyriakou and three other hard-liners, Martos, Papachristos and Syrmos.[50]

The five ethnic Greeks were put on trial (15 August), after having been maltreated in prison and they faced serious charges: that they had been plotting against the territorial integrity of Albania in collusion with the Greek Foreign Ministry and the Greek Intelligence Service (EYP) and that their acts amounted to treason.[51] The Socialist Party of Albania was on record in criticising the handling of the matter by Berisha, though not the charges as such which it regarded justified. As put by the Vice-President of the Socialist Party, Luan Hajdaraga, in the newspaper *Zëri i Popullit*, the trial of the five members of the Greek minority is 'a great and unwanted political burden that further aggravates the already sour atmosphere between Greece and Albania', concluding that 'diplomacy has been replaced by the courts'.[52]

The reaction of the five at the trial, which was followed closely by many Greeks journalists and international observers, was that they had been striving only for the rights of the minority and that the only reason that they had been put on trial was that they were ethnic Greeks.[53] However, the material gathered by Persecutor General Arben Qeleshi was conclusive and damning, proving collusion with the Greeks (obviously under the previous Greek Government) based on the archives of *Omonoia* that the Albanian authorities had been able to find (the *Omonoia* leaders had not managed to destroy the archives on time).[54] The sentences of the five ranged from five to eight years of imprisonment (9 September 1994).

Premier Papandreou, two days after the condemnation of the five did not mince his words. He accused the 'super-patriots' in Greece and among the minority for the damage they had done to Greek-Albanian relations.[55] But the Greek Government called the trial a parody and vetoed the payment of 30 million ECU (European currency units) investment credits to Albania and

expelled tens of thousands of Albanian workers from Greece.[56] In general, the reaction on the part of the EU to the Greek clamouring against Albania was of the kind do not stir issues that might cause embarrassment to the Berisha Government for it 'constitutes one of the main factors that can contribute to the maintenance of a precarious balance in Kosovo'.[57]

The next year, on 8 March 1995, following Greek and international pressure, including pressure from the US State Department (by the trouble-shooter Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke), the five were released by a decision of the Albanian High Validating Court.[58] Their release 'resolved a peculiar situation in which Albanian-Greek relations had become hostage to the fate of the five ethnic Greeks'.[59] And it cleared the way for Foreign Minister Papoulias's visit to Tirana, which Albanian officials hailed as a success, especially on economics and immigrant issues; and the visit paved the way for further talks and the Albanian Parliament adopted a law permitting private education and private religious and foreign-language schools, thereby addressing one of Greece's main legitimate concerns.[60]

On the whole, during Sali Berisha (1992–1997), 'bilateral relations were almost frozen with breaks in diplomatic contacts and violent border incidents', with relations improving 'during the Socialist-led government (1997–2005), but deteriorating again following the re-election of Berisha's Democratic Party in 2005', although they 'did not reach the low level of Berisha's first presidency, the contacts at political level were limited'.[61]

Mutual suspicion had not evaporated. This was to come about a little later, following the death of Andreas Papandreou and the coming to power of Costas Simitis, a moderate, who abandoned Greek irredentism for good and made concrete efforts in search of Greek-Albanian reconciliation. The end result was almost too good to be true, just two years after the MAVI misdeed and the trial of the five. Following a successful visit of Greek President Konstantinos Stephanopoulos to Tirana the change for the better in Greek-Albanian relations was inaugurated in the most official manner possible, with a 'Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, Good Neighborliness and Security', on 21 March 1996, signed in Tirana by Foreign Ministers Alfred Sereki and Theodoros Pangalos in the presence of the two Presidents, Berisha and Stephanopoulos (though it took two hears for the Greek Parliament to ratify it).[62]

The Treaty, whose text is short, referred to the development of relations and cooperation based on mutual confidence and respect and stated that both parties adhered to the inviolability of frontiers as stated in the Helsinki Final Act, territorial integrity and respect for fundamental freedoms and human and minority rights.[63] The Greek minority rights were to be fully respected and more Greek language schools were to be opened and to take measures against illegal crossings of the borders. Pursuant to this agreement, several schools for the Greek minority were opened. Moreover the Simitis Government pledged its full support for Albania's membership in NATO and a for a future EU perspective.[64]

Following this major breakthrough the Greek leaders of the minority in Albanian were no more under the influence of the irredentists and returned to their original moderate approach of the early 1990s under Zorbalas.[65] However still much remains to be done for Greek-Albanian relations to reach the stage of true reconciliation and one with no strings attached (see Chapters 14 and 15).

Notes

1 Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 175–6.
2 Andi Balla, 'Migration: Bridge or Pitfall in Albania-Greece Relations', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece: Understanding and Explaining* (Albanian Institute for International Studies/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) (Tirana, January 2018), 36.
3 Albert Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations: Deconstructing Paradoxes and Myths', in Alba Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 20, 22.
4 Balla, 'Migration', 36, 39.
5 Menelaos Dalianis, *To megalo anigma: chroniko ton ellino-albanikon scheseon sto deftero imisi tou 20ou aiona* [The Great Opening: A Chronicle of Greek-Albanian Relations in the Second Part of the 20th Century] (Athens: Polytipo, 2008), 61–2, 93; Virginia Tsouderou, *Exoteriki politiki: i megali asthenis* [Foreign Policy: The Great Invalid] (Athens: Papazisis, 1995), 114–5. James Pettifer, 'Albania, Greece and the Vorio Epirus Question', *The World Today* (August–September 1994), 148.
6 Due to the previous communist period in Albania, with religion banned, finding a suitable senior Albanian churchman presented difficulties, but there were such Orthodox Albanian churchmen available abroad, such as Bishop Arthur Lionel of the Boston Orthodox Albanian Church, who's candidature and circulated and was favoured by the Albanian public.
7 As reported in the Greek press in May 1993.
8 Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 160.
9 Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 242; Glevin Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations, the Past, the Present and the Future', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 10:3 (2019), 32.
10 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 242.
11 As pointed out by the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (Reference No 2959/94, 2 November 1994), 3.
12 This was the assessment of Alexis Heraclides, who then served as senior counselor for minority questions in the Greek Foreign Ministry, in two of his lengthy visits to southern Albania in 1993 and in 1994, where he was hosted by the Greek Consul Vassilis Bornovas, whom he thanks.
13 CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 1–8.
14 *Ibid*., 3.
15 International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), Annual Report 1997, Albania; Annual Report 2000, Albania; Annual Report 2003, Albania; Annual Report 2004, Albania.
16 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 243.
17 Reported in Greek daily *Kathimerini* (2 July 1993).

18 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 244; Marilena Koppa, *Oi meionotites sta meta-kommounistika Valkania: politikes tou kentrou kai meionotikes apantisis* [The Minorities in the Post-Communist Balkans: Policies of the Centre and Minority Answers] (Athens: Nea Synora, Livanis, 1997), 94.
19 Pettifer, 'Albania, Greece and the Vorio Epirus Question', 148; Miranda Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', *Balkan Series, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom*, 10/02 (2010), 4; Koppa, *Oi meionotites sta meta-kommounistika Valkania*, 148; Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 93.
20 Byron Theodoropoulos et al., *Skepseis kai provlimatismoi gia tin exoteriki mas politiki* [Thoughts and Contemplations on Our Foreign Policy] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 26–7.
21 See Tsouderou, *Exoteriki politiki*, 114–15; and document titled 'I elliniki meionotita stin Alvania, 1993–1995' [The Greek Minority in Albania], Confidential Report, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999 [henceforth Confidential Report], 5–7, 11.
22 Stavros Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou: Albania kai Ellada sti meta-Hoxha epohi* [In the Constellation of Nationalism: Albania and Greece in the Post-Hoxha Epoch] (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2010), 65.
23 *Ibid*., 65–6.
24 Based on discussions of Heraclides in 1992–1993 with Greek Foreign Ministry officials, especially those in A1, the Balkan Department.
25 Based on information garnered by Heraclides in 1992–1993 based on discussions with senior Greek diplomats on the basis of non-attribution. This is also the view of Stavros Tzimas, an experienced Greek journalist who specialises on Balkan and Greek-Albanian affairs. See Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 65–8. Confirmed in a discussion of Heraclides with Tzimas in November 2022.
26 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 242; Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', 3.
27 Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 162.
28 Confidential Report, 14.
29 Quoted in *Kathimerini* (2 July 1993).
30 Confidential Report, 14.
31 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 242. See also Greek dailies *Eleftherotypia* (28 June 1993) and *Kathimerini* (2 July 1993).
32 *Elefterotypia* (1 July 1993).
33 Robert Goro, *Athine-Tirane, Ditari i Krizave* (Shenime mbi Marredheniet Greko-Shqiptare) [Athens-Tirane, Crisis Diary (Notes on Greek-Albanian Relations)] (Tirana: Toena, 2010), 48.
34 *Ibid*., 48.
35 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 88–9; Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 242–3; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 163.
36 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 243.
37 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 89.
38 *Ibid*., 89.
39 Nikos Ziogas, 'Ta anthropina kai meioniotika dikaiomata kai oi Ellines stin Alvania' [The Human and Minority Rights and the Greeks in Albania], in Thanos Veremis, Theodore Couloumbis and Ilias Nikolakopoulos (eds), *O ellinismos tis Alvanias* [The Hellenism of Albania] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1995), 306.
40 Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 26.
41 Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 339, 458; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 161.
42 According to Tzimas in a discussion with Heraclides in November 2022.

43 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 69–77.
44 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 243.
45 *Ibid*., 243; Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', 3; Pettifer, 'Albania, Greece and the Vorio Epirus Question', 149; Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 32; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 163.
46 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 90, 96–8.
47 Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 32.
48 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 243–4; Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 90–1; Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict*, 163.
49 Confidential Report, 17.
50 *Ibid*., 18; Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 91–2.
51 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 105–19; Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 74; Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', 3; Thanos Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement* (Αθήνα: ELIAMEP, 1995), 110.
52 Quoted in *Kathimerini* (17 July 1994).
53 Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 74.
54 Lambros Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dinamei Ellines: i mionotita tis Alvanias meta ton Psychro Polemo* [Greeks and Potentially Greeks: The Minority in Albania after the Cold War] (Ioannina: Ekdoseis Isnafi, 2020), 119–20; Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 95–6.
55 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 115; Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dinamei Ellines*, 120.
56 Pettifer, 'Albania, Greece and the Vorio Epirus Question', 149; Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, 176.
57 Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement*, 111.
58 Tzimas, *Ston asterismo tou ethnikismou*, 117–19; Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 74.
59 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 245.
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62 Baltsiotis, *Ellines kai en dinamei Ellines*, 122; Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christopoulos, 'I elliniki meionotita tis Alvanias' [The Greek Minority of Albania], in Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christopoulos (eds), *I elliniki meionotita tis Albanias* [The Greek Minority in Albania] (Athens: Kritiki, 2003), 39–40; Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 79–80.
63 Dalianis, *To megalo anigma*, 79–80.
64 Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, 246; Vickers, 'The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions', 4.
65 Koppa, *Oi meionotites sta meta-kommounistika Valkania*, 160–4.

14 Pending issues and public opinion

Complaints and pending issues

From the late 1990s onwards bilateral Greek-Albanian relations are cordial more than ever before since the 1920s. However, a rapprochement has not been achieved even though it is stated to be the official aim of both parties from 1996 until today. There are three main reasons for this state of affairs: the still existing unresolved issues between them; the effect of ethnocentrism and nationalism in both countries, which is hardly in short supply, especially from the right wing of the political spectrum, which breeds suspicion and lack of confidence; and related to both are the negative effects and side-effects of their entangled histories, real or imagined which continue to haunt them.

But let us start with the pending issues, complaints or loose ends as perceived by each party.

On the Greek side, they include the following from the late 1990s until today: (1) problems related to the Greek minority in Albania, mainly the perceived lack of scrupulous adherence to minority rights, particularly as regards educational matters and property (e.g. unjustified demolition of properties belonging to minority families); (2) the existence of Albanian nationalism and at times anti-Greek spirit (as regards the latter, the Greeks suspect Turkish prompting); (3) the non-settlement of the issue of maritime zones between the two countries, with the blame, according to Greece, on the Albanian side (perhaps with Turkish connivance); (4) the anti-Greek clamouring of the Cham lobby in Albania with recurring Albanian Governments unable or unwilling to curb them; (5) Albanian expansionism along the concept of 'Greater Albania'; and (6) what remains of the Northern Epirus issue.[1]

There is also another issue, the Greeks soldiers killed during the Greco-Italian War of 1940–1941. The problem was brought to the fore by Greece in the second part of the 1970s and in the 1980s, with communist Albania forthcoming. Athens insisted on having them buried in southern Albania demanding for this purpose that cemeteries be erected in Albania. In the post-communist era, the Albanian Government did not object to the construction of two such cemeteries, but when the Greek side began to insist on having more Greek military cemeteries, Albania expressed its displeasure

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and implied that the Greek government of trying to artificially boost the number of Greek military cemeteries, the aim being to perpetuate the idea of 'the liberation of the so-called Northern Epirus and to commemorate it by organizing ceremonies in those cemeteries'.[2] At times the Albanian side has implied that the Greek Government is trying to artificially increase the number of Greek military cemeteries with the ultimate aim of strengthening the Greek presence in southern Albania, while the Greek side has hinted that the Albanians by preventing the construction of more Greek military cemeteries within their territory are negatively inclined towards Greece. The unfortunate end result has been the turning of a purely humanitarian issue into yet another difference in Greek-Albanian relations.

In any event on 9 February 2009, the two Defence Ministries, reached an agreement, 'On the search, exhumation, identification and burial of the Greek military fallen in action in Albania during the Italian-Greek war of 1940–1941 and cemetery construction on the territory of the Republic of Albania for their burial'.[3] To date, there are two such monumental cemeteries in southern Albania, in Këlcyrë (Kleisoura) and Bularat (Vouliarates).[4]

Another matter was the place names in Albania, which were written only in Albanian in the various travel documents and not as they have been established internationally in Latin letters, which is one of the few items that has been resolved in a mutually satisfactory manner in an agreement in May 2014 between Foreign Ministers Ditmir Bushati and Evangelos Venizelos.[5]

On the Albanian side from the late 1990s onwards there are two main grievances: (1) the pending continental shelf and other maritime zones between the two countries, with the blame for the lack of resolution squarely on the Greek side, with its attempt to gain the lion's share; and (2) the Cham issue and its various facets (lack of official Greek apology, compensation, return of properties). They are followed by two other basic concerns: (3) the unprecedented 'state of war', which in the Albanian eyes appears as concealed irredentism, and related to this the continued sequestrations of Albanian properties in Greece (for sequestration to remain in place as state of war is necessary); and (4) the policies and overall attitude of the Greek authorities regarding the Albanian immigrants and workers in Greece, which in the 1990s and early 2000s, was cruel and racist (fortunately this is rarely the case today).[6]

There are also three other issues that worry the Albanians: (5) the Greek minority and the Archbishop Anastasios, both seen as pretexts for Greece to meddle in Albanian affairs; and (6) the non-recognition by Greece of Kosovo as an independent state, Kosovo being an Albanian kin-state (like Cyprus is to Greece).[7] Moreover, the Albanians feel insulted that for the majority of Greeks, Albania continues to be, almost as in the 1990s, the least attractive of Greece's neighbours, as seen also by the very limited Greek tourism there, even though it has risen slightly in recent years.[8]

More crucially, for Albania EU accession is one of its main and unwavering foreign policy goals, with the Albanians enjoying a very low level of Euroscepticism. But there is apprehension that Greece might put various obstacles

in the course of the EU negotiations (note that several EU states are not enthusiastic with the prospect of Albania's accession) with recurring demands and may at the end toy with blocking Albania's accession.[9]

As regards the EU Albanian prospect, Athens had from the start been one of the main sponsors of Tirana's attempt to receive candidate status.[10] It is worth remembering that 'Albania was given the green light for candidate status during the Greek Presidency', in June 2014, a move that Greek Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos then described as 'a message of friendship [and] cooperation to Albania, to the Albanian government [and] to the Albanian political system'.[11]

In the first address to the Albanian Assembly, Prime Minister Edi Rama said that the only country with which Albania had 'issues' is Greece and that he was determined to seek a collaborative relation while upholding Albania's rights.[12] When Rama took over power in 2014, Greece had high expectations, in view of the traditional friendlier attitude of the Socialist Party towards Greece by comparison with the Democratic Party. The Socialists are generally regarded in Albania as more 'soft' on national issues and with closer ties with Greece, but this creates a problem for them. Thus it has been suggested that Rama's tendency for 'nationalist/patriotic rhetoric' and his 'persistence in raising the Cham issue' that goes well with the Albanian public but angers Greece, may be[13]

> viewed in light of his desire to enhance the Socialists' image as a force that is "no less patriotic" than the Democratic Party as well as his attempt to improve his image as a visionary pioneer both domestically and with regards to foreign policy.

Be this as it may, in June 2016, with Rama Prime Minister and Alexis Tsipras the Greek Prime Minister, Foreign Ministers Ditmir Bushati and Nicos Kotzias were in quest of 'a road map for the resolution of outstanding issues', 'a package' praised by the EU,[14] that included delimiting the continental shelf and maritime zones, abrogating the state of war, ensuring Albania's just treatment of the ethnic Greek minority, as well as the military graveyards of Greeks that lost their lives during the Second World War.[15] But these 'initiatives hit a wall',[16] due to various disagreements, including the Cham issue. The Tsipras Government, the product of a contradictory collaboration between the Greek left and an extreme right-wing party, was politically too fragile to move forward in resolving such conflicting issues. The Albanian government also had cold feet in trying to negotiate with the fragile Tsipras Government on such important issues such as the definition of the continental shelf and maritime zones, the state of war and the rest.

There followed tension, this time round due to a decision of local authorities in Himara to demolish the homes of 19 ethnic Greek families. The Albanian Government 'denied any violation of minority rights declaring that the plans of the Albanian government include thousands of demolitions along

the country, in an attempt to reconstruct the chaotic urbanization that took place after the 1990s'.[17] Moreover it specified that only the illegal properties which blocked access to the beach of the city were demolished and the decision was made by the municipal authorities.

But the Greek Foreign Ministry reacted by warning Albania that 'the protection of property rights, and in particular of minority rights, was one of the five conditions set by the European Union for Albania's EU accession negotiations to begin', adding ominously that '"if Albania sincerely wishes to join the European Union", it should demonstrate in practice that it respects the principles of the rule of law and protects the rights of all its residents regardless of their nationality and origin'.[18]

The ultimate question that arises is whether 'bilateral problems and hostile Greek public opinion could threaten Albania's accession process', but it is unlikely that Athens will try to create any 'mega conditionality' similar to the informal condition on the resolution of the name issue that it had placed prior to 2018 (prior to the Prespa Agreement) as regards the Republic of Macedonia.[19] But Albania remains worried for it is a fact of life that Greece as a member state of the EU can exert pressure during Albanian-EU negotiations and blocking Albania's accession remains 'a real possibility'[20] (for in accessions each EU member state is equipped with veto power). At the end of the day, the actual state of Greek-Albanian relations when the day for accession arrives will no doubt play a crucial role.

In what is to follow, we will present three issues that have not been covered adequately: the continental shelf and other maritime zones, the state or war and sequestration.

Continental shelf and other maritime zones

The territorial and water borders between Albania and Greece are defined by the January 1925 Protocol of Florence, which, inter alia, states (Article 10) that 'various issues will arise for determining the boundary line, which are not provided for by this Protocol shall be the subject of direct agreements between governments'.[21] This was at a time when sea issues were unclear, with no law of the sea convention and no generally accepted territorial sea (three miles were until then the most common extension but it was not the only one acceptable), and as for the international law concepts of continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone they did not exist.

A maritime delimitation in the Greek-Albanian case, be it through a negotiated agreement or an international court decision, is very much needed, so as to deal 'with the sharing of the waters between the two countries' and in order to protect the interests of customs and fiscal, sanitary, fishing and immigration matters, for self-defence against imminent danger, prevention of pollution in the sea, especially from oil, reserving the right to fishing for the protection of archaeological objects, to monitor robbery or illegal trade and other concerns.[22]

The issue of maritime delimitation had been first discussed bilaterally in 1993 but given the unfavourable climate in those days it was not pursued. It reappeared about ten years later, when Albania came to regard started Greece as 'a strategic ally', something not reciprocated by Athens.[23]

On April 2009, following negotiations between the two Foreign Ministries that lasted for almost two years, the two parties were in the position to adopt an 'Agreement on the delimitation of their respective areas, the continental shelf and other maritime areas belonging to international law'.[24] The Agreement was signed in Tirana by Foreign Ministers Lulzim Basha and Dora Bakoyianni, and on the same day a high-level meeting took place between President Sali Berisha and Premier Kostas Karamanlis.[25]

However, following the signing of the Agreement and prior to the necessary ratification by the respective parliaments, various Albanian commentators, such as former colonel Myslym Pashaj denounced the agreement as lop-sided in favour of Greece and amounting to the loss of Albanian territory. Pashaj view carried weight for he was one of the most specialised officers in the field of military topographical maps in the Topographical Detachment of the General Staff of the Albanian Army (when he retired he became the general secretary of a small nationalist right-wing party called Red and Black Alliance).

In Greece there was speculation that this condemnation did not originate from Albania, but may have been the doing of Turkey. In fact Cem Gürdeniz, a well-known Turkish retired admiral claimed he had advised the Albanians accordingly, something later denied by Premier Edi Rama.[26]

The issue was widely discussed in Albania, with the Mass Media at the forefront keen to oblige. Berisha's administration and the opposition Socialist Party under Rama was in a dilemma, and the final solution reached, upon the suggestion of Rama was to resort to the Albanian Constitutional Court.[27] Berisha asserted that he would abide by the Court's decision, whatever it may be, even though it is not binding. On 15 April 2010 the Constitutional Court rejected the Agreement on the grounds that it has 'procedural and substantive infringement', it is inconsistent with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, it runs counter to four articles of the Albanian Constitution, and more crucially that it does not take proper account of the islands in the delimitation (that is half or no effect depending on the circumstances), concluding that the outcome is not just and fair (equitable) and not in accordance with principles of international law.[28]

There was an uproar in both Albania and Greece and anti-Greek rhetoric in Albania that embraced even non-nationalists. A wider consequence was the cooling of Greek-Albanian relations for almost a decade (until early 2016 to be exact),[29] which accentuated 'lack of mutual trust'.[30] Greece for its part blamed everything on Albania and was convinced that Turkey was to blame for the Albanian about-turn, and predictably rejected any notion that the Agreement was unfair.

Ever since the main Albanian criticisms of the Agreement have been the following: (a) the Agreement had given full effect as regards the continental shelf not only to the large island of Corfu opposite the southern Albanian coastline, but also to the north of Corfu, to the tiny Diapontia islands, three of which are inhabited, whose most eastern island opposite Albania is Erikousa (Erikuza in Albanian) with only 496 inhabitants; and (b) an Albanian rock, named Barketa had been given full effect (uninhabited rocks or islet do not have a continental shelf), but curiously this did not enhance the delimitation in Albania's favour, on the contrary, it reduced Albania's maritime space by 15 square kilometres.[31] Consequently (c) Greece was awarded a considerable amount of maritime space at Albania's expense (350 square kilometres, according to some researchers).[32] Moreover, it has been reported that according to geological studies conducted jointly in the 1960s by Russian and Albanian geologists and in 2013–2015 by Norwegian companies, the maritime space gained by the Agreement by Greece from Albania is likely to be rich in oil and gas.[33]

Clearly such small islands should have limited or no effect for a fair and equitable agreement to be achieved. In fact the three inhabited Diapontia islands (Othonoi, Mathraki and Erikousa) have reduced effect in the Greek-Italian agreements of 1977 (continental shelf) and of 2020 (Exclusive Economic Zone), when the Greek territorial sea in the region was six nautical miles.

As for Albania, it did not have difficulty in reaching an agreement with Italy for the delimitation of the continental shelf in 1992, according to the equidistance method of delimitation in the Adriatic Sea and in the Strait of Otranto. In 1997 there was an agreement between Albania and Montenegro for delimitation of the Continental Shelf which was reached when Montenegro was part of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro), with Albania accepting Montenegro's proposal for a straight dividing line for the delimitation of the territorial sea.[34]

In 2020, the Governments of Edi Rama and Kyriakos Mitsotakis decided that the most propitious course is to resort to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This was reaffirmed a year later by the two Prime Ministers, who stated that the time has come to conclude a special agreement (a *compromis*), required for the initiation of court proceedings by the ICJ (in view of the fact that Albania, contrary to Greece, has not recognised the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ).[35]

In 2022, the Greek Foreign Minister sent a draft *compromis* for talks to ensue. But the two parties have not yet entered into bilateral negotiations for the conclusion of the special agreement, due to delays on the part of Albania which seems to have cold feet. This hesitancy is curious, for the settlement of Albania's maritime dispute with Greece by an international judicial body, be it the ICJ or ITLOS (International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea), is the best-suited forum guaranteeing an impartial, just and equitable solution. Tirana's indecision is probably due to the fears of various diplomats and analysts, who are held in high esteem in Albania. For instance, former ambassador

Shaban Murati (the author of a well-known book on the matter published in 2018)[36] has argued that Greece is not prepared to give less effect to the tiny islands north of Corfu and is attempting to gain the lion's share as it did in 2009, as seen by the extension of its territorial sea to 12 nautical miles in the Ionian Sea (in January 2021) which also applies to these small islands.[37] It is worth noting however that in the context of a judicial delimitation it is the ICJ (rather than the state or states concerned) that decides whether the island (or islands) under consideration should be given full, reduced or no effect on the basis of certain criteria elaborated by international jurisprudence, the main aim being to arrive at a just and equitable settlement.

Be this as it may, what is more than obvious is that even a mutually acceptable *compromis* would be difficult to agree upon and their maritime differences may remain unresolved for some time, which was not foreseen when the joint decision for recourse to the ICJ was taken in 2020.

State of war and sequestrations

The state of war was installed on the part of Greece by Mandatory Law 2636/1940, which referred to 'legal transactions by enemies and sequestration of enemy properties', and with the Royal Decree of 10 November 1940 on 'the definition as enemy countries in the sense of Mandatory Law number 2636/1940 of Italy and Albania'. Apparently, Albania was defined as an enemy due to the use of its territory for attacking Greece, and in the Paris Peace Conference, the Greek delegation had made the point that Albania had been an aggressor together with Italy and Germany, which Enver Hoxha emphatically denied (see Chapter 10).

The law of war with Albania, which is still valid in Greece, is absurd and obviously unconvincing and should have been lifted in 1945 or at the latest in 1949, after the end of the Greek Civil War, because in that war Albania had provided aid and refuge to the Greek communists of the DSE. And apparently it is not the fault of the post-war Albanian state that Greece was invaded by Italian fascist troops from Albanian territory for Albania was not an independent state but under foreign occupation from 1939 to 1944.

The real reason for the maintenance of the state of war from 1945 until the late 1960s and in the first part of the 1990s was the persisting claim to Northern Epirus, that is not to abandon it for the nationalists, or not to appear to abandon it for the pragmatists (here one sees the well- known fear of the domestic cost and its impact on electoral results).

On 28 August 1987, the Greek Government of Andreas Papandreou came up with what is generally designated in Greece as 'the partial unilateral lift of the state of war', promulgated by an act of the ministerial council (see the end of Chapter 10).

Since then various conservative Greek lawyers have come up with a legalistic argument that this lift of the state of war is 'null and void' for a state of war is declared or annulled only by the President of the Hellenic Republic.

Hence, the state of war remains in place.[38] Needless to say this also happens to be the view, for obvious reasons, of the Albanians, who refer to the lack of the ratification of the ministerial act of 1987.[39] For the Albanians, this lack of appropriate ending of the state of war is proof of Greece's continuing irredentist designs regarding southern Albania. However, the overall assessment of the EU and of the Council of Europe is that the state of war has ceased to exist.[40]

As Albanian international relations analyst Glevin Dervishi, has asserted, 'The existence of the Law of War foresees the highest conflict situation between two countries and the lack of recognition of their borders, meanwhile the existence of the treaty of friendship marks the highest level of friendship and cooperation between the two countries'.[41] And as put by Greek international lawyer Konstantinos Tsitselikis[42]:

> Surely, retaining the technical 'state of war' between Greece and Albania contradicts fundamental international legal norms regarding peaceful relations between states that have signed a bilateral Agreement of Friendship as the two countries did in 1996. Such an agreement *de facto* and *de jure* abrogates any state of war and has legal consequences regarding property issues. Surprisingly, though, even a number of [Greek] scholars are reluctant to challenge the 'state of war' question, much less politicians.

The situation of a state of war it is a real and palpable event, it simply exists or it does not exist, and in this case it has ceased to exist well before 1987, in 1944 or 1949 at the latest. Three other factors make the state of war irrational, indeed surrealistic. One is the sheer fact of normal diplomatic relations since May 1971, with the exchange and normal functioning of embassies and consulates (in war situations there are no diplomatic relations, they are usually severed prior to the hostilities). This is also the opinion of the Greek Council of State, the supreme administrative court, which in a decision of 1976 (2327/76) stated unequivocally that the state of war has ceased to exist from the moment the two states restored their diplomatic relations.[43] Second, there is the 1996 Greek-Albanian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, Good Neighbourliness and Security, which was ratified by the Greek Parliament, though with a delay of two years, in 1998 (Law 2568/1998). Third, is the sheer fact that the two states are allies in the same defence alliance, since 2009, when Albania joined NATO.

Yet on 18 June 1999, following the delayed ratification by the Greek Parliament of the Treaty of Friendship, the Albanian Embassy in Athens requested what was the legal state of war, to which the Greek Foreign Ministry replied, with a verbal note dated 28 June 28, that 'the Greek Laws No. 2636/1940 and 4506/1966 are still in force'.[44] Given the Albanian uneasiness on the matter Greece said that the note was 'mistakenly sent', but 'did not

act according to the diplomatic practice, and did not send to Tirana a second Note so as to specify the first one'.[45]

The state of war may be absurd, bordering on the farcical but it does considerable damage to Greek-Albanian relations, despite repeated statements by high-ranking Greek officials that it is an anachronism and should be lifted.

We would argue that the lack of more official abrogation than the one of 1987 and its maintenance in a state of limbo may not be as innocent as it appears. This may be the case for three reasons: (1) the continued irredentism on the part of the Right and the nationalists in Greece, with recurring governments stranded in a state of inertia, mainly for fear of the domestic cost of lifting the state of war; (2) the issue of sequestration which is directly linked and justified as long as the state of war exists[46]; and (3) perhaps its retention as a kind of 'reminder cum threat' towards Albania[47]; or put differently, to make sure that Albania does not forget which country is the more powerful one and has the upper hand in their relations (no doubt a Greek self-perception especially among the hawkish proponents of *Realpolitik* and the nationalists).

The sequestration regime adopted by Mandatory Law 2636/1940 for the properties of Albanians and Italians in Greece was later extended to the Germans, when Germany invaded Greece. What sequestration does is to put on ice 'enemy properties', but not do them any damage, sale or expropriation, in effect to protect them. Exempted from sequestration were the properties of ethnic Greeks who happened to have one of the above citizenships. With the end of hostilities, in late 1944 and 1945, the sequestration regime was dropped regarding the Italians and Germans citizens but not the Albanian citizens, though no war was waged from then on with or from Albania. The rationale for the still existing sequestration for the Albanian properties is of course the 'state of war' still technically in place for Greece, however absurd it may be.[48]

In fact with the end of the hostilities, Greece should have returned their properties as it had done with the Italian and German ones, but failed to do so, obviously hiding behind the presumed state of war. The situation is remarkable for the property involved is not even considerable, with some 200 immovable properties according to Greek sources, which would amount at the most to some 13 million Euros, hardly a staggering amount. The Albanians claim a bit more: the immovable property is more than 300, some 309 houses, buildings and apartments, 66 shops, plantations, woods and so on, amounting to about 350 dollars in 1940.[49]

According to Tsitselikis[50]:

> On 21 March 1996, Greece and Albania signed a Covenant of Friendship, Security, and Cooperation.117 According to article 15, both states pledged to cease any interference in each other's citizens' enjoyment of property rights on their own soil. Thus, Act 2636/1940 should have

> been considered abolished, and the Greek government should have examined the modalities of how to remove the sequestration which of course had always been dubious. After all, sequestration should entail guardianship of enemy property as long as the state of war endures, not loss of ownership. Cham property rights, access to Greek citizenship, and the right to resettle in Greece are all issues which remain unresolved, even after the collapse of the totalitarian regime in Albania and the opening of the border.

Public opinion: perceptions of 'the other'

As pointed out by Ioannis Armakolas and Giorgos Triantafyllou, the Greek-Albanian state of play 'is further perplexed by public opinion', and they point to the fact that 'the two societies have completely different, and often sharply opposing, attitudes about bilateral problems and disputes, as well as about the perceptions of security threats emanating from each other'.[51] Moreover,[52]

> [t]he negative collective memory of Greek elites toward Albanians on one side, and the cultivation of fear and siege psychology against Greeks by Albanian politics on the other side, enhance the old bilateral problems that have been existed for a long time – as well as the new ones.

It is generally accepted by Albanian and Greek experts on Greek-Albanian relations that public opinion in significant and poses problems to an eventual reconciliation. Thus, we will be comprehensive in this regard, presenting the research findings in the early 2010s and the more detailed findings ten years later.

Public opinion in the early 2010s

The study of public opinion in 2012–2013, undertaken jointly by Albanian and Greek researchers or separately, shows that their mutual images though far from satisfactory are clearly less negative and hostile than in previous decades, especially by comparison to the turbulent 1990s (see Chapter 13).

Starting with Greek public opinion in 2012–2013, a persistent finding for decades is that the Greeks in their great majority show very little interest as regards their Balkan neighbours, as if Greece was geographically situated somewhere else, to the west, centre or north of Europe. To the extent that they show some interest it is for Serbia (regarded traditionally as pro-Greek), Bulgaria and Turkey, with the latter replete with an array of misperceptions tinged with paranoiac fear. Interest for Albania as well as North Macedonia is almost nil. But things were much worse in the 1990s and early 2000s, with interest for Albania having doubled in 2012–2013 by comparison to before, but still meagre.[53]

In 2012–2013, about half of the Greeks regarded relations between the two countries neither good nor bad, with only a third regarding them good, even though they were better than ever before. The supporters of the Right wingers regarded relations bad, while those of the Left wingers were of the opposite view, valuing good relations with Albania. Most Greeks regarded as a major issue the immigrants from Albania and attached less importance to the possible rise of Albanian nationalism and the concept of Greater Albania. Even the Greek minority in Albania was low in the list of priorities for most Greeks. One in six Greeks had some notion, mostly hazy, of the Cham issue, and those who had heard of it regarded the property issue of the Chams as the main obstacle to the development of better Greek-Albanian relations although they put the blame squarely on Albania because of the way it has handled the matter.[54]

Nine out of ten Greeks (88 per cent) were of the firm belief that Greece has aided Albania in its much needed development from 1990 onwards. Some 58 per cent believed that Greece has assisted Albania in its EU road, while 32 per cent believed that this was not the case. The majority of Greeks, some 65 per cent were convinced that Albania was violating the human and minority rights of the Greek minority. Greek society was split as to the role the immigrants had played in the economic development of Greece (which, incidentally was crucial for Greece to 'make it' and join the Euro zone): 46 per cent believed that there was no such contribution on their part, but 51 per cent accepted it as a fact. Contrary to the dominant belief in the 1990s, two-thirds of the Greeks did not regard the Albanian immigrants as a source of threat, but one-third continued to regard them as a threat, the later tending to be right wingers. Some 46 per cent regarded relations with the Albanian immigrants in Greece good, 42 per cent that they were neither good nor bad, and only 11 per cent that they were bad.[55]

Moving on to Albanian public opinion in 2012–2013, some 52 per cent regarded relations with Greece normal at the inter-state level, and less, 43 per cent as regards relations between the two peoples. Most Albanians, contrary to most Greeks (with their persistent threat perception from Turkey) did not believe that they are threatened by other states or peoples. But in 2012–2013 the minority among them who felt that an external threat existed to Albania's national security put Greece first, with 18.5 per cent and Serbia second with 17 per cent.[56] As regards the Greek minority, they believed that the Albanian authorities observe their human and minority rights, even though Greece from time to time meddled in Albania's internal affairs using as a pretext the Greek minority or Archbishop Anastasios.[57]

The three issues that preoccupied the Albanians in the early 2010s vis-à-vis Greece were, first and foremost the Cham question, second the way the Greek authorities treated the Albanian immigrant workers in Greece, and third the state of war. By 70 per cent they regarded the Cham issue as the biggest problem in Albanian-Greek relations[58] and as the main reason that had

now permitted Greek-Albanian relations to be as friendly as they should be. They were also concerned with the state of war affair, and most of them, at least two out of three were, surprisingly, not aware of the Friendship Agreement of 1996, which in effect puts the state of war to rest. And astonishingly as many as 61 per cent of the Albanians held the belief that the two countries have fought each other sometime in the past, even though this has not occurred, save for one-day skirmish on 2 August 1949 (see Chapter 10). And they were convinced that the Albanian immigrants did contribute considerably to the Greek economy (which is indeed the case).[59]

Lastly, as to the Greek stance regarding Albania's EU road, the view in the early 2010s was split.[60] Almost half of the Albanians believed in 2012–2013 that Greece is helpful in this major endeavour and goal for Albania, yet a little more than half had various reservations and were not certain whether this is indeed the case, fearing that the support may be hollow. They expressed the fear that when the great moment arrives for Albania's formal EU accession, Greece would be lukewarm and come up with various unbearable demands, in effect blackmailing Albania and otherwise not giving its assent for accession.[61]

Public opinion in the early 2020s

Ten years later (in 2021) we have good as well as bad news regarding mutual perceptions.

Starting with the good news, both sides (by some 50 per cent), to be exact 47 per cent Albanians and 50.5 Greeks believe that bilateral relations have improved by comparison to previous decades and both are convinced that they have better relations at the personal level than before, and that the negative attitudes have markedly weakened.[62] Furthermore, a great majority of Albanians (85 per cent) believe that Greece has assisted Albania in the last 20 years, a view predictably shared by the Greeks (by 90 per cent). And as regards the Albanian immigrants, an issue that had bedevilled their relations in the 1990s and early 2000s, both publics maintain that the immigrants are integrated into Greek society (79 per cent of the Albanians and 85 per cent of the Greeks are of this view); and the Greeks, contrary to the 1990s, do not regard the immigrants a threat (74 per cent). Moreover, the relations of the Greeks with the Albanian immigrants are regarded as good: for 57 per cent of the Albanians they are good, with 34 seeing them as neither good nor bad; and 54 per cent of the Greeks see them as good and 37 per cent as neither good nor bad.[63]

The Albanians remain dedicated to their EU road, with nine out of ten supportive and they regard the EU constructive and as enhancing international cooperation and stability (contrary to the Greeks where only four out of ten regard the EU positively).[64] The Albanians are more convinced than in the previous decade that Greece supports Albania's EU perspective (now 66 per cent, with those against this view trailing behind at 28 per cent) and this is also the view of most Greeks (63 per cent, with those which doubt it 18 per cent).[65]

More crucially, neither party sees the other as a threat, something of particular significance as regards Albania, the weaker party, with historical memories of Greece's aggressiveness. In general the Albanians in their great majority (74 per cent), contrary to the dominant view under Hoxha (with its siege mentality and the thousands of bunkers), do not see their country threatened by any foreign country, and in general are 'more relaxed'[66] than the Greeks in what for them is basically a benign and collaborative international and regional environment. The minority of Albanians that perceive a threat, are only one in four, some 26 per cent (which is lower in southern Albania, some 19 per cent), with 11 per cent of the Albanians placing Serbia first as the main threat, and not Greece as was the case in the previous decade, followed by Iran with five per cent, Russia with four per cent and Greece with only three per cent. For the Greeks the international and regional environment appears more conflict-prone and unpredictable, with Greece facing a very real threat, according to four out of five Greeks: 80.5 per cent are convinced that Turkey is a very real threat to Greece, with all the other threats negligible (the US comes second as a threat according to only 2.5 per cent, Germany with 1.5 per cent and Russia and North Macedonia with 0.5 per cent). Only 11 per cent of the Greeks are of the view that no threat exists from Turkey or from elsewhere.[67]

Another input is that the majority of Albanians, some 60 per cent, are positively inclined towards the Greeks in general (with 30 per cent opting for neither positive nor negative view), with the percentage as high as 83 per cent positive for the Albanians living in southern Albania and 47-50 for those living in central and northern Albania. Moreover, the highest percentage of positive attitudes towards the Greeks is to be found for those above the age of 55 and less for those below 55, with the younger Albanians less positive. In Greece the percentage of positive attitudes is slightly less, some 47.5 per cent (for 42 per cent neither positive nor negative) and it can be found among the Left and Centre and contrary to the Albanians the younger generations are more positively attuned.[68]

Now as to more equivocal findings, six out of ten Albanians (57 per cent) claim that their country has good relations with Greece (which is higher, eight out of ten in south Albania), while only one in three Greeks regard relations with Albania good.[69] The Greeks have the most positive opinion of Serbia (61 per cent) and Israel (50.5 per cent) and regard France as Greece's best friend in the international arena. The Albanians regard the US as Albania's best friend internationally followed by Germany and the EU. As to the Greek attitudes towards neighbouring countries, first comes Serbia as to positive views (with 61.5 per cent), with the positive view regarding Albania surprisingly only 15.5 per cent, even less than for North Macedonia (17 per cent) and Bulgaria (21.5 per cent), with Turkey at the bottom with only 3.5. The Albanian attitudes regarding neighbouring countries are the most positive for Kosovo (95 per cent), Italy (94 per cent), Turkey (84 per cent), North Macedonia (69 per cent), Montenegro (67 per cent), with Greece sixth with 61 per cent (with the negative views regarding Greece at only 12 per cent).[70]

An interesting finding worth highlighting is that overall the Albanians inhabiting southern Albania are more positive in their assessment of the Greeks than the other Albanians, which implies that the borderland with Greece to the south, were there is greater proximity, more contact and increased and more accurate knowledge, has not led to mistrust and ill-feeling but to the very opposite, which of course was not the case a century ago, with the Greek invasions of southern Albania or in the interwar period and the early Cold War, but did exist two centuries before, under Ali Pasha and in the Greek War of Independence with the Orthodox Christian Albanians south of the Pindus Mountain range.

As to the bad news, both parties 'continue to hold some negative opinions and stereotypes about each other', and also to associate the other side with 'some negative values and attributes' and the knowledge of each other is often inaccurate.[71] The situation appears to be worse and 'more problematic at the diplomatic-political level, with each party having different perceptions of the bilateral issues and disputes that divide them.[72]

As regards the Cham issue, the Albanians regard it as the second major problem after the maritime issue, 85 per cent of the Albanians are aware of it and 65 per cent regard the issue of the Cham properties an obstacle to the relations between the two countries. Six out ten Greeks are aware of the Cham problem (more than in the previous decade) and 40 per cent regard it as an obstacle in Greek-Albanian relations.[73] Nine out of ten Albanians regard the Greek minority members in Albania fully integrated in Albanian society and treated in the same way as the rest of the population (94 per cent). On the contrary, eight out of ten Greeks (78 per cent) believe the Albanian Government does not respect the rights of the Greek minority.[74]

Another worrying finding is that 58 per cent of the Albanians continue to believe that Albanians and Greeks have fought each other (with 34 saying that this is false), which may be three per cent less than in the previous decade but is still high. Even more alarming is the fact that an even a greater number of Greeks, 73.5 per cent believe that the two sides have fought each other, with only 20 per cent disagreeing (we suspect that this is due to misinformation regarding 1940–1941 peddled by the Greek media and recurring governments).[75]

The Greek media, whose overall knowledge of Albania leaves much to be desired, have for years peddled the view that the Albanians are deep down anti-Greek and pro-Turkish. The former, as we have seen, has not been proven, but the latter is. However, this greater liking or sympathy for Turkey by comparison to Greece, need not be translated into identification with Turkey politically, culturally or otherwise.[76] The Albanians are well aware that Turkey trails behind Greece as a democracy and as a state abiding by the rule of law. Moreover under Erdogan, Turkey has diverged markedly from its previous EU perspective, not to mention its increasingly anti-US rhetoric (both are the very opposite of Albania's consistent posture).

As regards Albania and Turkey, it is a fact that Turkey under Erdogan has been courting Albania for years. Relations between both Albania and Turkey cover extended cooperation in various spheres, such as security, infrastructure, energy, telecommunication, education, health and cultural sectors, and Turkey is the fifth largest trading partner and the sixth leading foreign investor in Albania.[77] Turkey has made various donations and Erdogan, apparently upon his own initiative, has achieved a considerably friendly rapport with Edi Rama, the Albanian Prime Minister since 2013.[78]

All this has been a source of worry for Greece. However, this pro-Turkey trend has its limitations, not least because of Erdogan's religious agenda in Albania, with his over-emphasis on Islam in Turkish-Albanian relations (striving to build impressive mosques), which does not go well with most Albanians, given the fact that they are in their great majority secular and as for the Muslims among them few are religious (and of course the Albanians remain most of all firm advocates of Albanianism). Moreover, Albania and Turkey have divergent and unbridgeable agendas regarding the EU and the West.[79]

By way of conclusion, Greek-Albanian relations appear paradoxical. As put in a recent study of public opinion by Greek and Albanian researchers, although the two societies and their economies 'are highly interconnected' their 'diplomatic and political relations remain testing, and in near permanent state of volatility' and they draw our attention to 'the increasingly hostile rhetoric manifest in electronic and social media', whereby their identities appear to develop 'in opposition to one another'.[80] As Ditmir Bushati has put it, 'The general perception in Albania is that Greece has never fully accepted the creation of the modern Albanian state; whereas the general perception in Greece is that Albanians have a hidden agenda aimed at diminishing Greece's clout in the region'.[81]

Notes

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2 Glevin Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations, the Past, the Present and the Future', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 10:3 (2019), 28–9.
3 *Ibid*., 28.
4 *Ibid*., 29; Bashkim Zeneli, 'Why Are the Albanian-Greek Relations Moving Backwards?', in Alba Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece: Understanding and Explaining* (Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, January 2018), 56.

5 Bledar Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication: A Tool for Stronger Albanian-Greek Relations', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 96 7.
6 Alba Cela and Sashenka Lleshaj, 'Albanian Greek Relations from the Eyes of the Albanian Public – Perceptions 2013', Albanian Institute of International Studies & Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Tirana: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2014), 6–7, 10–3, 21, 28, 31, 36, 45; Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 73–4, 100–5; Albert Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations: Deconstructing Paradoxes and Myths', in Alba Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 18–9; Dorian Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues between Greece and Albania Threaten the Stability and Liberal Democracy in Balkans', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 110–4; Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 33–4; Armakolas, Siakas and Berzani, *Relations between Albania and Greece*, 12, 92.
7 Cela and Lleshaj, 'Albanian Greek Relations', 7, 11–2, 17, 21, 28, 34–5. Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 22; Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues', 112.
8 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 10–1.
9 Alba Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations in the Context of Albania's EU Integration Process: Gap between Reality and Perception', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 9, 12; Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues', 111.
10 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 10; Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 9, 12–13; Zeneli, 'Why Are the Albanian-Greek Relations', 47; Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 88.
11 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 10.
12 Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations in the Context of Albania's EU Integration Process', 7.
13 Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 76–7.
14 Alba Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 8.
15 Maja Maksimovic, 'Greece Returns to the Balkans? Assessing Greece's Western Balkan Policy under SYRIZA-Led Government', Working Paper Series of the Graduate Centre Humanities and Social Sciences of the Research Academy Leipzig, no. 14 (2016), 13.
16 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 10.
17 Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 81–2.
18 Maksimovic, 'Greece returns to the Balkans?, 14.
19 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 11.
20 Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 13.
21 Kasëm Cenaj, 'Albanian-Greece Agreement on Setting Maritime Boundaries, According to International Law', *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4:3 (2015), 143.
22 *Ibid*., 143.
23 Senada Reci and Luljeta Zefi, 'Albania-Greece Sea Issue through the History of Facts and the Future of Conflict Resolution', *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 7:3 (2021), 299.
24 Jonida Mehmetaj and Stela Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece over the Delimitation of Maritime Zones', *Lex Portus*, 8:3 (2022), 12.
25 Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 24.
26 Gürdeniz is widely known in Turkey and Greece for his dogma of *Mavi Vatan* (Blue Fatherland) that has been adopted by Turkey in recent years. In 2020 Premier Rama when asked denied Turkish admixture, this at a meeting of *The*

Economist, held in Athens (June 2020). See Greek daily *Kathimerini* (21 September 2020).
27 Reci and Zefi, 'Albania-Greece Sea Issue', 303; Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 100.
28 Reci and Zefi, 'Albania-Greece Sea Issue', 303, 307; Mehmetaj and Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece', 18, 21; Cenaj, 'Albanian-Greece Agreement', 147.
29 Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues', 111; Zeneli, 'Why Are the Albanian-Greek Relations Moving Bakwards', 51–2, 57, 59; Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 72.
30 Zeneli, 'Why Are the Albanian-Greek Relations Moving Backwards ', 66.
31 Reci and Luljeta Zefi, 'Albania-Greece Sea Issue', 307; Mehmetaj and Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece', 21.
32 Cenaj, 'Albanian-Greece Agreement', 146–7; Mehmetaj and Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece', 16.
33 Mehmetaj and Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece', 16.
34 *Ibid*., 11.
35 Mehmetaj and Meçaj, 'Dispute between Albania and Greece', 9. See also Greek dailies *Kathimerini* (20 October 2020); and *Vima* (2 October 2021).
36 Shaban Murati, **Çështja e paqenë e detit, një intrigë diplomatike greke apo shqiptare?** [The Inexistent Sea Issue, a Greek or Albanian Diplomatic Intrigue?] (Tirana: ALSAR, 2018).
37 Shaban Murati in *Dita*, reported at in.gr (11 August 2022).
38 Lambros Baltsiotis, 'O ellinikos alitrotismos stis ellinoalvanikes scheseis sto telos tou Psychrou Polemou' [Greek Irredentism in Greek-Albanian Relations at the End of the Cold War], in Nicos Marantzidis and Elias G. Skoulidas (eds), *Ellada kai Alvania ston Pshychro Polemo* [Greece and Albania in the Cold War] (Athens: Alexandria, 2021), 204.
39 Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues', 110–1; Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 21; Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 31.
40 Baltsiotis, 'O ellinikos alitrotismos stis ellinoalvanikes scheseis', 204.
41 Glevin Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 31.
42 Konstantinos Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece: From Historical Minorities to Immigrant Newcomers* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2012), 314–5.
43 Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues', 110.
44 Dervishi, 'Greek-Albanian Relations', 31.
45 *Ibid*., 31.
46 The Albanians believe that the retention of the state of war is also linked to the Cham population and their property demands. See Feta, 'Bilateral Governmental Communication', 103.
47 Baltsiotis, 'O ellinikos alitrotismos stis ellinoalvanikes scheseis sto telos tou Psychrou Polemou', 205.
48 *Ibid*., 207–9.
49 *Ibid*., 207–10; Yiannis Ktistakis, 'Periousies Chamidon kai alvanikes periousies' [Properties of Chams and Albanian properties], *Kathimerini* (17 February 2017).
50 Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece*, 314.
51 Armakolas and Triantafyllou, 'Greece and EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans', 10.
52 Jordan Jorgji, 'Public Opinion and Albanian-Greek Relations', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 116.
53 Ioannis Armakolas, 'The Greek Public Opinion towards Albania and the Albanians: Social Attitudes and Perceptions', *South East Europe Programme Hellenic Foundation for European* (December 2013), 8.

54 *Ibid*., 8–9.
55 *Ibid*., 9.
56 Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 9. See also Andi Balla, 'Migration: Bridge or Pitfall in Albania-Greece Relations', in Alba Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece* 35.
57 Cela and Lleshaj, 'Albanian Greek Relations', 22, 31; Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 22.
58 Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 21.
59 Cela and Lleshaj, 'Albanian Greek Relations', 21–3, 35–6.
60 Zeneli, 'Why Are the Albanian-Greek Relations Moving Backwards?', 47; Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 8.
61 Cela and Lleshaj, 'Albanian Greek Relations', 36; Cela, 'Albania-Greece Relations', 9; Jorgji, 'Public opinion and Albanian-Greek Relations', 129.
62 Armakolas, Siakas and Berzani, *Relations between Albania and Greece*, 11–2, 46–7, 92.
63 *Ibid*., 62–3, 66–7.
64 *Ibid*., 11–2.
65 *Ibid*., 11, 18, 90–1.
66 *Ibid*., 11, 93.
67 *Ibid*., 11–2, 20–5, 92.
68 *Ibid*., 72–3.
69 *Ibid*., 44–5.
70 *Ibid*., 11, 18–9, 28–9.
71 *Ibid*., 92.
72 *Ibid*., 92.
73 *Ibid*., 12, 52–5.
74 *Ibid*., 12, 56–8.
75 *Ibid*., 90–1. Armakolas and Siakas have come up with another disturbing finding: that the most ambiguous or negative views regarding Greece and the Greeks are to be found among the younger generations, the university educated and the more affluent Albanians. See Ioannis Armakolas and George Siakas, 'Oi staseis tis koinis gnomis tis Alvanias enanti tis Elladas: Taseis kai prooptikes' [The Attitude of the Public Opinion of Albania Towards Greece: Trends and Prospects], Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, Policy Paper 61 (2021), 2, 8, 11–13. We are of the view that the evidence in this regard is tentative and there is a need for more scrupulous research so as to ascertain if this is indeed the case. However according to Albanian opinion research it is well established that the young people attending university facilities 'are indoctrinated by nationalism to a considerable extent' and although they 'have the chance to access broad literature – in order to expend their ability to think rationally – they are still remaining subjects of a very ethnocentric spread of information'. See Jorgji, 'Public Opinion and Albanian-Greek Relations', 127.
76 Armakolas, Siakas and Berzani, *Relations between Albania and Greece*, 2, 13.
77 Gentiola Madhi, '"Our Brother Erdogan" – From Official to Personal Relations of Political Leaders of Albania and Kosovo with the Turkish President', in Ioannis Armakolas, Barbora Chrzová, Petr Čermák and Anja Grabovac (eds), *Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Ways Forward in Analyzing External Actors' Influence* (Prague: Prague Security Studies Institute, April 2021), 155–6.
78 *Ibid*., 155–8.
79 *Ibid*., 159–61.
80 Armakolas, Siakas and Berzani, *Relations between Albania and Greece*, 9.
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15 The quest for reconciliation
A road map

As it has been put recently 'Albania and Greece remain a complicated riddle in Southeast Europe'.[1] Albanian-Greek entanglements commenced their trajectory with a common Orthodox Christian struggle during the Greek Revolution, which at times involved even the Muslim Albanians. But following this, in the course of the last three decades of the nineteenth century and at the turn of the century, there was ambivalence, estrangement and by the 1910s a clash of interests. This course was inevitable in view of Greece's attitude towards the Albanians and its opposition to the rise of Albanian nationalism. The Greeks could not swallow the idea of an Albanian nation, especially one including the Orthodox Christian Albanians whom they regarded as merely 'less civilized Greeks' or 'potentially Greeks'.

From 1912, with the Albanian Declaration of Independence, but with independent statehood not assured until 1920, its border with Greece remained unclear, given Greece's claims to southern Albania (which it called 'Northern Epirus') and the repeated violent occupation by the Greek Army for a period of six years. When Albania became independent though truncated, its treatment of the Greek minority left much to be desired and this applied even more so to the Greek treatment of the Chams during the same period, culminating in the tragic years 1940–1945 for both Chams and Greeks and concluding with the odious ethnic cleansing of the Chams by EDES. From 1945 until 1967, relations between Greece and Albania were hostile or, at best frosty, with Greece claiming 'Northern Epirus' at the Paris Peace Conference and thereafter still toyed with this idea, clinging to the preposterous 'state of war', thereby making the restoration of relations impossible, in spite of the repeated Albanian attempts to mend its fences with Greece from 1950 onwards.

Things turned to the better from the early 1970s when diplomatic relations were restored. The so-called 'partial lifting' by Greece of the state of war in 1987 was a positive sign, but then came the resurgence of the Northern Epirus issue in the first part of the 1990s, though in more guarded form, intertwined with the treatment of the Greek minority in Albania and the treatment of the Albanian migrants in Greece. And there remains the groundless 'state of war' and the lack of agreement regarding maritime regions, with

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the Cham issue having reappeared after decades of oblivion during the Cold War, burdening the Greek-Albanian atmosphere even more.

The vicissitudes of Greek-Albanian relations and the various difficult and precarious moments are legion, on the Albanian side tinged with a sense of victimhood and injustice. Generations of Albanians have been brought up with the image of the Greeks initially not accepting their nationhood and national identity, to be followed by outrageous claims to a large chunk of Albania, which Greece arbitrarily called 'Northern Epirus'. The Greeks for their part were at a loss until recently to accept that the Orthodox Christian Albanians are actually Albanians, and the Greek schoolchildren and Greek soldiers had been brought up with a popular song: 'I have a little sister who is a real doll [very beautiful] and her name is Northern Epirus and I love her very much'.[2]

As Albert Rakipi, Chairman of the Albanian Institute of International Studies argues[3]

> [p]aradoxes and myths in Albanian-Greek relations, like in the history of other nations, are tied generally to the past, and exclusively to times of war, but in the case of Albania and Greece the degree of influence paradoxes and myths have in contemporary bilateral relations is unique.

We have some doubts about the uniqueness regarding paradoxes and myths in the Greek-Albanian case, but it is a fact that the myths, riddles and paradoxes are more than apparent and continue to burden the atmosphere, not permitting a true reconciliation to emerge, despite various attempts in recent decades. And we certainly agree with Rakipi's conclusion that '[i]t is not possible to explain Albanian-Greek relations in the post-Cold War context without understanding and explaining the paradoxes and myths created by history' and that '[u]ndoubtedly the strengthening of these relations is not possible without liberation from these myths and paradoxes'.[4]

There is the notorious 'state of war' when in fact there is nothing of the sort and normal diplomatic relations exist for more than half a century. Albania never attacked or committed an act of aggression against the far more powerful Greece, even though many Greeks believe this to have been the case, presumably in 1940 together with the Italians, and Albania is legalistically regarded by many Greek nationalists as technically still 'an enemy state'. Most Greeks tend to 'forget' that Mussolini's Fascist Italy invaded Albania in April 1939, overthrowing its ruler King Zog and thereafter Albania ceased to exist as a sovereign independent state. Yet another paradox on the Greek side is that even though the Great Idea ended dramatically in 1922 in Asia Minor, the Northern Epirus dimension of the Great Idea did not peter out but survived from the 1940s until the 1960s and in the early 1990s.

The claim for Northern Epirus was unjustified from the very beginning, in view of the small number of Greek speakers involved and the sheer fact

that the Orthodox Albanians, despite their earlier affinity with the Greeks, were not Greeks and did not seek annexation by a foreign country. Indeed the division as it took place with the 1913 Florence Protocol was fair for both parties; it was the most that Greece could hope for (contrary to what happened with Macedonia with Greece acquiring the lion's share, 51 per cent of geographical Macedonia), with some 25,000–30,000 Greeks in Albania and an equal number of Muslim Chams in Greece.

Given this overall situation and its historical background, there is until today an uncertainty as to the real aims of the other side, if its true agenda is untrammelled relations and genuine reconciliation to the benefit of both peoples? Many among the Albanian elite wonder whether Greece by virtue of its greater economic, military and political power and international influence, membership in the EU and so on, desires the good of Albania, or is bent on controlling their country, interfering in its internal affairs and in the future may place many an obstacle to Albania's EU road. And many Greeks, the elite as well as the wider public, wonder whether Albania is or can be a true friend and reliable partner of Greece or is deep-down anti-Greek and prone to flirt with Greece's arch-adversary, Turkey?

Now let us present the broad outlines, akin to a road map for eventual reconciliation. The situation as it has emerged today after two centuries of entangled history/ies is asymmetrical due to two factors: the sheer difference in power and capabilities and the far greater responsibility of Greece for the malaise, in view of what it did from 1878 until 1920, in 1945–1967 and again in the first part of the 1990s, and also its responsibility regarding the state of war and its obvious lack of fairness on the maritime question in 2009, its heavy-handedness towards the Albanian immigrants in Greece in the 1990s and early 2000s, living aside the thorny Cham issue. Albania's responsibility is limited to its treatment of the Greek minority which had not been ideal, especially in the interwar period and in the first part of the 1990s, but it was far better than the fate of other ethnic or national minorities at the hands of hostile states, for instance the fate of the Muslim-Turkish minority in Greece, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria in the last decade of the Cold War or of the Greeks of Istanbul.

Given the above facts, the ball is mostly on the Greek side of the court; it is for Greece to first show a constructive spirit of reconciliation and to indicate that it sincerely desires to bury the hatchet once and for all; and of course for Albania to reciprocate positively to what are promising overtures. If Athens does not take the initiative, things may turn to the worse in the future.

The positive steps on the part of Greece are obvious and have been mentioned by Greek officials in recent years, such as for instance that the state of war is a stark anachronism, unfounded and should be lifted. Greece can take the initiative on the three of the four problems that bedevil Albanian-Greek relations: state of war, sequestration and maritime issues.

The state of war should be abrogated as soon as possible, in the most authoritative manner possible, by a decree of the President of the Hellenic

Republic with due ratification by the Greek Parliament. Sequestration is to be lifted in tandem with the necessary return of property and/or due compensation.

As regards the continental shelf and other maritime boundaries Greece should show its willingness for a fair and equitable outcome by stating its readiness to accept that the tiny islands north of Corfu should have no effect, especially now with Greece's 12 miles territorial sea in the Ionian Sea, the desideratum being a 'positive sum outcome', with two winners.

There is also a need for a far more comprehensive Friendship Agreement, another issue that has been highlighted by Albanian commentators[5] as well as by Greek officials. Such a new and more comprehensive agreement should make clear reference to the following: (a) repudiation of any form of irredentism (as seen in the Prespa Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia); (b) repudiation of all forms of meddling in the internal affairs of the other state (this is meant for Greece); (c) changes in the relevant school-texts, deleting or limiting the negative references to the 'Other' (as foreseen in the Prespa Agreement, with perhaps the French-German achievement in this regard as the model); (d) fully guaranteeing the minority rights of the members of the Greek minority in Albania (education and no arbitrary demolition of their properties); and (e) various provisions for the Albanian immigrants in Greece, such as social security, pensions and so on, to further normalise their status and treat them as equal members and as integrated in Greek society.

If all of the above are achieved, we will be left with the delicate Cham issue. In view of positive developments on other important issues, the Cham thorn may lose its present-day resonance. And Albania and Greece may possibly 'live with it', though disagreeing and respecting their mutual disagreement. But at a minimum three things need to be done to ease the situation: first, a formal apology on the part of Greece for EDES's heinous acts, though clarifying that Zervas and his despicable lot were not under Greek instructions to act as they did; second, to state unequivocally that these international criminal acts against the unarmed Chams in 1944–1945 amount to violent 'ethnic cleansing'; and third that Greece expresses its sincere and deep sorrow for what occurred in 1944–1945 against the Chams.

As for compensation or property return, although it is very difficult for Greece to accept, the issue remains on the table and could be resolved one way or another. What is clearly out of the question is the return of the Chams in the places where they lived 80 years ago, for their mass return to Epirus in regions currently inhabited by Greeks would inevitably cause considerable friction and destabilisation. However, they should at least be allowed to visit their former homeland on humanitarian grounds. And at the end of the day it may well be, as Robert Elsie has pointed out, that[6]:

> In the long run, the European dimension must intervene on the Cham issue and help provide a solution. It can only be hoped that one day soon, following the example of western Europe, the border between the

Greece and Albania will be stamped into the ground and made invisible and that the people of the two countries will all be able to come and go as they wish, leaving the sombre past behind them.

Notes

1 Ioannis Armakolas, George Siakas and Alketa Berzani, *Relations between Albania and Greece* (Tirana: Open Society Foundation for Albania (OSFA) and Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), 2021), 9.
2 Konstantinos Giakoumis, 'Greek-Albanian Relations in Greek and Albanian Historiography of the 2000s', in Alba Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece: Understanding and Explaining* (Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies/ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, January 2018), 139.
3 Albert Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations: Deconstructing Paradoxes and Myths', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 21.
4 Rakipi, 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations', 34.
5 Dorian Koçi, 'Unsolved Political Issues between Greece and Albania Threaten the Stability and Liberal Democracy in Balkans', in Cela et al. (eds), *Albania and Greece*, 114.
6 Robert Elsie, 'The Cham Albanians of Greece', in *Keeping an Eye on the Albanians: Selected Writings in Albanian Studies* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2015) (Kindle Edition), location 2898.

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